

CYRIL WHYMAN'S MISTAKE.

BY

CARRIE J. HARRIS.

Author of "Mr. Perkins, of Nova Scotia ;"

"A Romantic Romance," etc.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.	
CYRIL'S DECISION	9
CHAPTER II.	
QUEENIE SYLVESTERE	20
CHAPTER III.	
QUEENIE'S RESOLUTION	30
CHAPTER IV.	
IN THE FAR WEST	35
CHAPTER V.	
FAIR AND FALSE	45
CHAPTER VI.	
CYRIL'S NEW HOME	56
CHAPTER VII.	
A STARTLING DISCOVERY	64
CHAPTER VIII.	
QUEENIE'S STRATAGEM	70
CHAPTER IX.	
MARION'S MARRIAGE	85
CHAPTER X.	
HOME AGAIN	94
CHAPTER XI.	
MARION'S DEFEAT	104
CHAPTER XII.	
TO BE OR NOT TO BE	111
CHAPTER XIII.	
g'S TRIUMPH	119

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S
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to
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CYRIL WHYMAN'S MISTAKE.

CHAPTER I.

CYRIL'S DECISION.

“OU are wrong, Cyril. It is beyond all reason for you to expect any woman to be true to you year after year, unless she is aware her affections are returned. I know Queenie is a true little darling, but she is only human, and I think you will quite agree with me when I say she is also a very much admired and dainty bit of humanity. Still you are her girlhood's lover, and likely to succeed, if you are not too much of a laggard in your wooing, where many a more fortunate man in some respects would be sure to fail; but I feel almost certain, if you go out west without first making known to her the true state of your feelings, that you will find on your return some more daring, though less conscientious, man has stepped into your place during your absence.”

“Then let it be so, my dear sister. If Queenie's heart is so easily won from its first love, it is scarcely worth the trouble of winning, and I wish the fortunate possessor, whoever he may be, joy of his bargain. However, I do not altogether agree with you,

Marion. I have more faith in Queenie's constancy, and she knows I love her, though I have never yet told her so in plain language. She never said she cared for me, but I feel as certain of the fact as that the sun is now shining in yonder sky. Still, I am not so utterly selfish as to seek to bind her with vows which may never be kept. It may take years for me to obtain a fair start in life, and I shall never ask her to share my home till I can provide her with as comfortable a one as that she will give up for my sake. To boldly face poverty ourselves is one thing, but to force those we love into such a hard life is another matter. Oh, no, Marion, believe me, it is far the better plan to leave her here unfettered among her friends, and if she can in time forget me, she will be far happier with some well-to-do husband who can provide her with a comfortable home and an untarnished name."

"Your love for her cannot be very deep, Cyril, if you can thus calmly picture her the bride of another," exclaimed Marion, passionately.

"If you cared for her one-half as well as she cares for you, you would never leave her in this heartless manner. She will be wretched after your departure for a time. Then she will probably consider herself deserted and turn to the first man who comes her way, be he ever so unworthy, for the sole purpose of showing the world that she no longer cares for you.

"Cyril, think well before you place her in such a position. Tell her you love her, and let her know your chief ambition is to make a comfortable home, in order that you may ask her to share it. You will then have something to look forward to which will encourage you to persevere in the weary struggle you must undergo while endeavouring to reach the summit of your ambition. You need not fear opposition from her parents; for although they might reasonably be expected to look pretty high in the social world for a mate for their peerless daughter, I know they will willingly consent to her

engagement with you when they learn it is really necessary for her happiness."

"Enough has been said, Marion. When I have earned a luxurious home to offer Queenie, then, and not till then, will I ask her to be my wife. You cannot turn me from my purpose, so it is useless for us to discuss the subject longer.

"There is nothing so detrimental to the success of a struggling young professional man as for him to find himself burdened with a delicate wife for whom he cannot provide the necessary comforts of life.

"I have always had the impression that had our father waited a few years before he married he would now be living happy and respected, instead of lying in a dishonoured grave. He married before his practice was large enough to support his family, and, with an invalid wife to provide for, he was obliged to find the necessary means for the support of his household. He turned to speculation, and that it ended disastrously, was, I consider, his misfortune, not his fault.

"I will go to this ball to-night and dance with Queenie, as I shall with my other young lady acquaintances, then I will banish myself to the far west, where I will stay till I have made a success of my life.

"If, when I have succeeded in wresting a prize from fortune, I find on my return to Nova Scotia she has cared enough for me to be true in the absence of vows, we will spend the rest of our life together. If I find she has forgotten me and become the wife of another, I know I shall always possess the love of my devoted sister, and with that I shall be content."

Marion turned from her brother with a weary sigh, and gathering her arms full of his clothing she went back to her occupation; while he wandered over the sunlighted hills of picturesque old Digby, bidding adieu to his many friends, for that day was probably the last he would spend in Nova Scotia for many years.

"The terrible tragedies in Marion's life have made her awful visionary," he thought, as he walked slowly away from their humble home. "She has brooded so many years over her love for Wilmer Morton that I suppose she now considers it would be treason to her womanhood to think of any other man. I do not imagine there is another woman in Canada who would ever have thought of being true to a dead lover all those years, but I dare say she takes as much pleasure in grieving for the past as a more practical woman would find in the society of her husband and children. 'Constancy, thou art a jewel,' but it is a good thing for the masses that you are rare enough to be considered a very precious gem. If every woman died broken-hearted over the loss of a defective lover, there would not be many maidens left, I am afraid, to console us poor bachelors when we felt the need of consolation."

But let us leave this youthful philosopher to go his way unattended, and return to his heart-broken sister, who we find lovingly folding her brother's garments, as she places them in the great travelling trunk which stands ready to receive them, while bitter tears are slowly coursing down her pale cheeks as she works. She had made a last appeal to Cyril before his departure. Too well she knew the sorrow which would be felt by her darling friend when she learned she was deserted. She had made her appeal and failed, friendship could do no more.

At length her task is finished, and she seats herself by the open window to await her brother's return. She wondered in a dreamy way if the sun shone more brightly upon the happy pedestrians who were wandering around the dear old town in search of pleasure, than it did upon her lonely solitude.

Though only thirty years of age, life seemed very sad to her, this beautiful autumn afternoon. For years Cyril and she had lived their life together, for the two

were orphans, and her brother was all she had left in this world for her to love. Now he was going to leave her. Going to the far North-West, the land she regarded as the paradise of gamblers and outlaws of every description, the land where gambling dens and whiskey shops flourished, and where churches were almost unknown. And indolent, pleasure-loving Cyril was going to this barbarous land. He was to be thrown among all those dangers and temptations for years to come.

Would the prayers and tears of a loving sister be sufficient to keep him from harm? Ah, no! She felt some stronger tie was needed to keep his feet from straying far from the path of rectitude when he reached that howling wilderness of sin, the great North-West.

She knew of stronger men than he who had gone astray in that fearful land. Would the dear God, in His tender mercy, keep him pure and bring him safely home at last?

If only Queenie's loving hand could be at the helm to guide the dear wanderer in his search for fame and gold how it would mitigate her fears for his future; but Cyril had just told her it was not to be. The little sweetheart of his boyhood days was to be banished from his life till he had won a luxurious home in which to place her. Would that time, she wondered, ever come?

How she shuddered as she thought her brother, like a dear one, long ago, might give up the weary struggle, after a few faint efforts, and sink into the yawning pit which western sharpers have ever ready to entrap their unwary victims.

Her thoughts went slowly backward over the years which had flown. What a proud and happy maiden she had been the day Cyril graduated from the high school of his native village. He had stood at the head of his classes, and she almost fancied she could still hear the cheers of his classmates as he went forward to receive

his honours. When the exercises were all over they had taken Queenie with them, for in those days nothing was complete for Cyril which Queenie did not share, and gone home to be petted and congratulated by their darling mother. Then had come the quiet tea-drinking in their invalid mother's room, with pretty little Queenie seated at their mother's feet and Cyril telling them all what he meant to do when he graduated and became a famous lawyer. What wonders he was going to achieve in the legal profession. Of course his future home was to be in their own beautiful Digby, for in their eyes no other spot in all the world was half so fair. How the three had listened to his chatter and implicitly believed every word of his prophecy. It is so easy for us to place our faith in those we love. Alas, that we should be so frequently compelled to change our minds!

After a happy hour spent with their mother, she had sent them away to seek amusement elsewhere while she rested.

Cyril and Queenie had wandered away together in the beautiful summer gloaming; and when the clear full moon rose from her watery bed, the old historic Basin of Annapolis, and threw her mellow light over the grand old hills, woods, and streams, her own true lover came to her side. Then the sweet old story was told once again, and vows were made which the happy girl fondly believed would last till death. Oh, the sweet and bitter memories of that fatal night! Would time ever cause the picture to grow more dim? There had been but one short hour of perfect happiness, the full cup of bliss of which we poor erring mortals are permitted to taste but once, and then the fearful blow had fallen. Oh, that her father, the father she loved and revered almost as her god, had not been the one to crush her. She was listening to her lover's pleading for an early wedding day, when she was sent for to hear the long story of deceit and wrong-doing which had killed her girlhood.

When Dr. Whyman finished the terrible recital of his wickedness, his unhappy child staggered from his presence, and throwing herself upon the floor of the deserted drawing room, she bitterly bewailed her lot.

Why must such a fearful burden be placed upon her young shoulders? She had done no wrong in her brief life that she should be so cruelly punished. There would now be no happy wedding day for her, for Wilmer, her darling Wilmer, would take back his vows when he learned who she was. He would never mate with the daughter of a felon. And her own dear mother, how was she to tell her all? Would it kill the gentle woman when she learned her husband, she thought so good and true, was a forger and a thief. And Cyril, happy, high spirited Cyril, how would he bear the change? There would now be no college course for him.

Then suddenly her moans had ceased. It was but to test his daughter's faith and love, that her own dear father had told her this fearful tale. She would return and ask his forgiveness for having doubted him for even one short hour, but before she had accomplished her purpose, the sound of a pistol rang through the house, and rushing to her father's office, followed by the frightened servants, she found him dead upon the floor, the weapon with which he had committed the fearful deed still firmly grasped in his lifeless hand.

What words can describe the bitter shame and sorrow which had been their portion when his frightful act was known.

For years in the eyes of the world no one had been more highly respected than Dr. Whyman, but when his hidden life was brought to light, as is ever the case, friends quickly fell away, and the stricken family were left almost alone to bear their burden of sorrow and shame. His own mad act had debarred him from Christian burial, and in addition to their other sorrows, they were compelled to search for a spot in which they could lay their beloved dead. After

some delay he was laid to rest in a secluded glen a few miles from his native town, where his faithful heart-broken wife was soon sleeping by his side, and their orphans were left to face the world alone.

Among others who had been ruined by her father's misrepresentations were the local bankers of the town, who were also the employers of Wilmer Morton. A bogus Mexican silver mine, of which he was a promoter, had swallowed all their gold, and they were obliged, in the face of numerous difficulties, to close their doors, and he was thrown out of employment. A few days after the failure he came to say good-bye. He was going to the North-West to seek for position.

"We have decided at home it is better for me to go Marion," was his answer when she begged him to remain. "It will probably be months before I will be successful in obtaining another situation around here, and the enforced idleness would almost drive me to despair. Besides we will both be far happier for a time where our history is not known.

"I wish it was in my power to take you with me now, but you know I have lost nearly all my savings by this wretched failure. However, I will send for you and Cyril as soon as it is possible for me to do so. Meanwhile I leave you in my mother's care. She has promised to be very kind to you, my darling, and will assist you in obtaining some music pupils; but you must promise me not to work too hard while waiting for me to send for you."

Then he had gone; and the struggle for their daily bread had begun.

His mother, true to her promise to Wilmer, had been the means of procuring her plenty of employment; but teaching music was weary work for the spoiled and pampered daughter of Dr. Whyman, and she who all her life had been accustomed to having servants at hand to do her slightest bidding, was now forced to do all the work of their humble household. But she was compelled

to persevere in spite of drudgery, for her own and Cyril's bread depended upon her exertions.

The frequent letters from Wilmer kept hope alive in her despairing heart, and a year after his departure came the welcome news that he had begun to prepare a home for her.

"It will be but a poor affair compared to what you have been accustomed to in the past," he had written, "but I feel you will be much happier even in this humble home, if we can only share it together. I can hardly realize, after our cruel separation, that it will be only a few short weeks before we will once more meet, never to part I trust again on earth. It seems almost too good to be true."

She had made her simple preparations for her journey, but before the summons came she was told her Wilmer was no more. Shot in a gambling den on the far Pacific coast, it was said, but no further explanation was ever given the true-hearted girl, who had borne her burdens so bravely, and for whom all hope in life was now ended.

There had been a few days of wild despair, and she had then roused herself for Cyril's sake. She had her brother yet to think of, and her life should be devoted to his advancement. If for herself there was nothing left to live for, Cyril needed her. He must have the education for which he longed; and she had kept her vow. How she had toiled that he might go through college, and she was rewarded for her efforts by seeing him graduate with high honours.

He had recently been admitted to the bar of his native province, and now she was doomed to suffer another pang. He had decided to go west to make his fortune. Would he be successful in his undertaking, or would he also perish in that dreadful land, as her Wilmer had done years before?

She was awakened from her dream of the past by Cyril's return, and hastening below she joined him in their tiny parlor.

"I am late, Marion," he exclaimed when she entered. "I meant to get home in time to help you with my packing, but I was expected to stand and talk with every one I met."

"The packing is completed. Did you go in to say good-bye to Mrs. Morton?"

"Yes, I did! But I can assure you it was much against my will. If you only knew how much I detest that woman you would never have asked me to enter her presence. She thinks I am making a great mistake in going west. Some of the Atlantic cities of the United States, she declares, is the place for me. Some civilized place, where I can exercise my talents and make a home for my sister. I have no right, she tells me, to separate myself from my only sister, who has done so much for me. I ought to remember that I was leaving her alone while I went selfishly wandering off on a wild goose chase I knew not where. I told her the separation would be a short one, and that as soon as I was fairly established in Kamloops, I planned to have you join me there. Kamloops, she repeated the name after me, and words cannot describe the scorn with which she uttered it. Was I aware that Kamloops was a wretched little mountain hamlet, containing about a dozen shanties? What was a lawyer going to do in a place like that? She understood I was going to reside in Victoria, which was quite bad enough, but to take my sister, who had been reared in the lap of luxury, to Kamloops.

I informed her you had not been occupying a seat in luxury's lap of late years, and that I did not despair of providing you with as comfortable a home as that one to which you had been accustomed recently.

That, if I did not succeed as a lawyer, I would shoulder my pick and start for the Cariboo gold mines, where I would dig my fortune out of the earth as many a better man had done before me. When I told her that, the old lady fainted, and I took myself off before she came

around. She evidently has some serious reason for wishing us to keep away from the west. What can it be? Have you the least idea?"

"That her darling son has lost his life in that wild land, would, to me sufficiently explain her endeavours to keep her friends from following his example."

"Friends; yes, her friends. A friend of yours she may be although I very much doubt the fact; but she never managed to make me think her a friend of mine. However, we shall not agree about her friendship, so we will have no discussion about her; but let us have some tea, for my walk has given me quite an appetite; and then it will be time to dress for this gorgeous ball. You will go; will you not?"

"Yes, I have promised to play some for them, so I suppose I shall have to go."

"How I should enjoy seeing you waltz once more. I heard a man say to-day, you used to be called the finest dancer in Digby. Will you waltz with me just once to-night Marion?"

"No, Cyril; ask me anything but that. The last time I waltzed was with Wilmer. Oh how many years ago. I shall never dance again. Indeed, I do not suppose I could dance now if I really tried to do so."

Cyril turned impatiently away and went to his room to dress.

"If," he thought, "Marion would lay aside those eternal black dresses and fix herself up like other girls, she might, even at this late day, make a fairly decent match. She is not bad looking, but I do not suppose she ever will. I wonder what Queenie will wear to-night. Something pretty of course."

"*Mere* Sylvestere will always see that she is becomingly dressed. I declare I forgot to ask Marion if she had a decent flower for me to wear. I do not suppose she has thought of it, for Queenie has always supplied me before on those occasions."

CHAPTER II.

QUEENIE SYLVESTERE.

UEENIE SYLVESTERE was the only child of one of the wealthiest and most influential families of Digby. From her cradle she had never known a wish ungratified or a want unsupplied. That she was not completely spoiled was because her sweet unselfish disposition was one that could not be spoiled by any amount of flattery and indulgence. Perhaps were the winds of adversity allowed to blow too roughly against this delicate, fragile flower of humanity, she might in time become a peevish, disappointed woman; but her life was as sheltered as that of some rare hothouse plant.

Was it to be wondered that Cyril should hesitate before asking this dainty little lady to share his life?

That she loved him with all the love of which her warm, unselfish heart was capable he did not for a moment doubt, but that she who had been so tenderly reared could be happier with him in poverty than she could possibly be in her own comfortable home without him, he did not believe.

Could he have been assured of her parents' willingness to sanction her engagement with a poor young man like himself, he would have revealed his love for her before leaving his native town, but his pride revolted at the thought of their opposition.

"It is better," he reasoned with himself, "for the dear little girl to suffer a few heart pangs which she will soon

get over, than for Cyril Whyman to be treated to a grand burst of eloquent scorn from the lips of *pere* Sylvestere for daring to aspire to the hand of his cherished daughter and heiress."

In this he was mistaken. Could the old couple have been assured of their daughter's happiness, they would willingly have consented to her union with the man of her choice, were he ever so poor, providing he was not unworthy of her love.

Cyril had always been a favorite of the old people, and they were much disappointed when they learned he was determined to seek his fortune in the west, for the great *El Dorado* of Canada was regarded by them with almost as much horror as by Marion. Her parents discussed his prospects and determined that on no account would they consent to their daughter's settlement in the west.

If he wishes to marry Queenie, her father firmly declared, he must make his home in Digby; but they are both young and it will not hurt him to go away for a year or two. A young man is always better for knocking around the world a bit before he takes upon himself the cares of a family.

Mrs. Sylvestere, as the day of Cyril's departure drew near, was almost in despair. Could it be possible that he intends going away after all, without first speaking to Queenie? Contrary to her usual custom, for she had always insisted that a young girl's attire should be very simple, she had yielded to Queenie's entreaties and given her consent for a grand ball dress to be prepared for her daughter.

"If anything more is needed to make the dear child attractive in his eyes, she must certainly have it," thought the fond mother.

But the afternoon of the day fixed for the ball had arrived, and Cyril had not come near his little sweetheart.

"I really think, William, you ought to sound him to-night regarding his feelings for Queenie," she said to her husband, with her eyes fixed upon Cyril as he rapidly passed their house.

"It is no use, Margaret," was his answer. "I shall not throw our little girl into his arms. If he does not care enough for her to come boldly forward and ask for her, he does not deserve her, and he shall not have her."

"But, perhaps, the poor fellow is afraid to ask without some encouragement," pleaded his wife.

"Afraid to ask; what can he be afraid of? 'Faint heart never yet won fair lady.' My private opinion is the young men of the present day are afraid of nothing requiring cheek. I was not afraid to ask for you, was I? And I had a far more stern parent to face than Cyril has."

"It will break Queenie's heart if he goes away without first speaking to her."

"Just like a woman," he growled, getting up from the lounge where he had been reclining. "If everything does not go smoothly a heart is going to break somewhere; but give the most of them a fine establishment, plenty of pretty dresses, and all the rest of the tomfoolery which they happen to fancy, and I notice they generally manage to pick up a cement somewhere with which they can glue those smashed-up hearts together again. Dress the girl up in her finery to-night, and take her to this wonderful ball. Of course, the young popinjay will be there. He always does manage to be on hand when there is any fun going, but if she is not attractive enough to make him open his mouth, let the fellow drift. There are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught, and Queenie does not want for bait with which to catch hers."

Mrs. Sylvestere bent over her sewing with a heavy heart, as her husband left the room.

"William," she murmured, "is like every other man. They all think we women only require a few of the comforts and luxuries of life to make us perfectly happy and contented with our lot, whatever it may be. How little any of them really know us. The majority of us would be far happier to live a life of poverty and toil in some hut with the man we love by our side, than to become occupants of a palace away from him. How much happier the world would become if the lords of creation could only be made to understand that a luxurious home and a substantial bank account are but secondary considerations with a true woman. And yet what can be more noble than to see a man striving for years to amass a fortune in order that he may lay it at the feet of the woman he loves. But 'man's love is of man's life a part, 'tis woman's whole existence.' It is no such hardship on their part to leave us as it is for us to see them go. Queenie! how you startled me creeping into the room in that fashion."

"I am very sorry, mamma. I had no idea I was creeping," answered her daughter humbly. But my dress has arrived. Will you come and see it?"

"I suppose so," said her mother, rising. "I expect you will be so fine to-night, you will be turning the heads of all the village beaux, and sending all the maidens home dying of envy."

Queenie was silent. She had also seen Cyril as he hastened past her home that afternoon without once glancing in the direction of the window, where she was seated.

What could have changed him so? she asked herself. There had been a time, she thought, not so long ago, when he would have found it almost impossible to pass her by without stopping for a few minutes to have a little chat.

She shed a few bitter tears over his present neglect, and then bravely brushing them away, she consoled

herself with the thought that the evening would bring them once more together and all would be well.

"Your dress is certainly lovely," exclaimed her fond mother, as they entered the room where Queenie had carefully laid it out for her mother's inspection. "If Cyril does not surrender himself unconditionally to-night," thought the elder lady, "he must be as blind as a bat regarding Queenie's loveliness. She will be the belle of the ball to-night."

And she turned from the delicate pink-tinted silk and dainty lace to admire the fair form it was to adorn.

But the belle of the ball, Miss Queenie, was considered by far less impartial judges than her loving mother, as she entered the ballroom a few hours later, "looking, as a stately old dame remarked to the gratified Mrs. Sylvestere, "like a half-blown blush rosebud in her sheeny silken robes."

However, it is not of her appearance she is thinking, as her eyes wander so restlessly around the room, till at last they rest upon Cyril and his sister in a secluded corner. And she sees with dismay that they have not noticed her entrance. To-night she feels her fate will be decided, for Cyril leaves to-morrow, and if he does not speak to-night and confirm the vows made in their childhood, she knows he never will. But he will not be so cruel, her own true Cyril, as she calls him in her thoughts, for she knows he loves her truly, though he does not tell her so. Of what can he be afraid? Not her parents, for they have ever treated him with much kindness. What then can be the obstacle which keeps them apart? There is no one else for Cyril, though he is always very polite to the young ladies of his acquaintance, never bestowing upon any of them attentions beyond the demands of ordinary politeness. But to-night she feels all mysteries will be explained, he will never go so far away and leave her in this dreadful uncertainty.

And the happy girl moves up the room, receiving the greetings of her friends, and watching for Cyril to come and claim her for the first waltz, as has been his custom since they were children attending the juvenile parties of the community together; but her programme is nearly filled when he at last comes to her side. For, if he has been oblivious to her entrance, there were plenty of others who quickly discovered the fact that she was there, and formed a circle round her, clamoring for her favours. But she resolutely determines to keep the first waltz for Cyril, who at last appears, and with a careless greeting, and asks if he is too late to secure a waltz with the charming belle of the evening.

His flippant manner annoys her more than she cares to acknowledge even to herself; but bravely concealing her disappointment at his neglect, she coolly replies that she has one or two dances left.

Her indifferent manner nettles him; and he makes an attempt to apologize by saying, "I really tried, you know, to reach you before, but the circle formed by your devoted admirers was too strong for one man to break."

"Yes, I noticed how hard you were trying to break the circle, and pitied you much," she answered, with a mirthless laugh; "and to reward you for your exertions in my behalf, I have kept the first waltz for you."

"Thank you, darling," was his whispered answer, as he took her programme and inscribed his name upon it. "I see you have one more left. May I have that also?"

"You may have them all, if you wish," was the reply of the happy girl, and in an instant he realized what he had said.

"No; that would not be quite fair to the rest, to say nothing of the danger in which I should be placed. I should not care to be mobbed by the infuriated gallants who would be left. It would not suit me to carry a black eye with me on my journey west. There would be danger

of my being taken for a representative of the prize ring instead of a peaceful legal gentleman, which, you know, would never do. But there goes the music, come ! ”

And gravely placing his arm around her he whirled her among the revolving couples which were fast filling the floor.

“ I will be careful not to forget myself again,” he thought. And when the music ceased he led her to her mother, and, with a dignified bow, he hastened away.

But he had called her darling once more. He had not ceased to love her ; and Queenie, happy Queenie, danced with all the commonplace young men whose names were inscribed upon her card, and wished the evening ended, for at its close Cyril was to dance with her again, and she knew he meant to tell her once more how dear she was to him, and ask her to share his life ; and she, the happiest girl in all the world, would grant his prayer.

There would be the sorrowful parting on the morrow, but a year or two would soon pass, and then Cyril would come back to her, each loving the other all the more for their brief separation. Then they would be united to part no more in this world. O joyful thought !

Mrs. Sylvestere, from a secluded corner, watched her daughter anxiously. Could Cyril have spoken to her to-night ? But no, that could not be the cause of her gay spirits, for he had not once approached her since they danced that first dance together. Was she really trying to show him she could be happy in her own way without his aid. If such was the case, her little girl was stronger than they thought her.

“ We must go soon, Queenie, my child,” she told her, as she seated herself by her mother for a few moments towards the close of the evening. “ You look very tired. I fear you have been over-exerting yourself to-night.”

“ No, Mamma ; please do not ask me to go home yet. I am to dance the last dance with Cyril. And it may be

QUEENIE SYLVESTERE.

years before we dance together again. You will stay any the very last just this once, will you not?"

"Very well," answered her mother, touched by the pleading look upon her daughter's face. "I will stay as you so much wish it. But I am doing wrong," she thought, "for Cyril has shown by his conduct to-night that Queenie is nothing to him, and she is doomed to suffer another disappointment when he leaves her. No, Mr. Walton, you cannot dance with Miss Sylvestere again to-night. I have insisted upon her resting," she said to a would-be admirer of Queenie's who had just appeared to claim her.

"You do look tired, upon my word, you do," he emphatically declared, "though I had not noticed it before. It takes a mother's eyes, you see, to discover facts. Allow me?"

And the effeminate little dandy took the fan from the hand of his fair companion, and began to wave it languidly, as he sank into a seat by her side.

"I do believe I am really tired too, Miss Sylvestere. But this has been a most delightful evening. Do you not think so? A perfect success, in fact. Good floor, good music, and also good lights. What more could be wished, except lots of pretty young ladies; and by Jove, we have them also. Digby ought to be excessively proud of her beautiful young women. I have never yet met their equals. Upon my word, I have not."

At another time, this brainless chatterer would have furnished the mischievous Queenie much amusement, but to-night she found his attempts at entertainment most unendurable. At last, to her unspeakable relief, she saw Cyril coming for her.

In her anxiety to escape, she found it an effort to treat her tormentor with common politeness; and, with a hurried "Excuse me, Mr. Walton, but I am engaged to Mr. Whyman for this dance."

She grasped Cyril's arm and almost dragged him away.

of my
inst. "What is the matter?" he asked, much surprised at
excited manner.

"I think if I had been compelled to remain five minutes longer in Walton's society, I should have strangled him," she replied, trying to laugh. "I had no idea he was such an intolerable bore."

"What a pity I came when I did. You would have won the eternal gratitude of all Digby for ridding the place of such a nuisance; but Marion is going to play our favourite waltz for us, and I feel reluctant to lose a single bar. So put poor Walton out of your mind and let us be happy while we may."

The old familiar waltz, heard so often and danced together in the sweet long ago, caused them to forget they were surrounded by a gay crowd, and Cyril drew his companion closer as they floated round and round to the sweet and dreamy strains. At last the music died away, like the distant echo of some vesper bell, and the band, with a noisy clash, struck up "Auld Lang Syne," bringing them back to the realities of life as suddenly as we are sometimes awakened from some beautiful dream.

The evening was over, and Cyril silently led his companion to her mother, nerving himself to say the parting words, which he determined should be said to-night.

"I shall have to say good-night, and also good-bye, Mrs. Sylvestere," Queenie heard him saying to her mother.

It was Cyril's voice, but how far away it sounded. She felt as if she was being slowly turned to stone. Was this the way in which they were to part! With all those eyes upon them, how could she say good-bye? Cyril might have spared her this.

"Shall we not see you in the morning? You do not leave till afternoon," asked Mrs. Sylvestere, with a pleading look at the young man.

She could not bear the look of agony upon her daughter's face. Cyril's eyes must be opened at any cost.

But his reply killed the last hope.

"I am afraid I shall not have time to call. I shall be so very busy during the morning."

"I am sorry you could not spare a few moments for the purpose of saying farewell to your old friends, Mr. Whyman. I trust you will have a pleasant journey. Queenie, we must go at once."

And, without noticing his outstretched hand, she calmly drew her hand through her daughter's arm and rapidly led her from the spot.

Cyril stood for a moment irresolute.

"Shall I follow and make my peace?" he asked. But no, 'tis better so; she will forget me sooner if we meet no more."

And, with a heavy heart, he bade farewell to his friends; and, seeking his sister, he left the ball-room.

CHAPTER III.

QUEENIE'S RESOLUTION.



THE Bay of Fundy steamer was calling her passengers on board as Queenie mounted the attic stairs of her father's residence the morning after the ball.

Could it be possible that this pale and sorrowful little maiden, in her sombre robes, was the brilliant belle of last night's entertainment? How could a few short hours have changed her so completely? Taking her stand by an open window looking seaward, she raises her opera glasses, and sweeps the deck of the vessel as her moorings are cast loose and she turns her back upon the town.

She will have one last look at the object of her young heart's love before he vanishes from her sight for ever.

There he stands, her idol, waving his hand merrily to his friends on the pier, who have assembled to see him off, and who heartily cheer as he is swiftly borne from them.

"There is no sorrow in his heart," she thinks, as he bids adieu to his native land, perhaps for years; and bitter anger for a time takes the place of grief. For an instant she stands undecided. Then, with a look of settled determination upon her fair face, she once more lifts her glasses and takes one last look at the loved form, then turns away. She must, she will forget him.

Love's young dream is past for her. Her idol is dethroned. But Cyril Whyman would yet be called upon

to pay a heavy penalty for the slight he had put upon her.

What were those lines she had read a year ago in an old romance? They had troubled her much at the time. She understood them now.

“Heaven has no greater rage than love to hatred
turned,
Nor Hell a fury like a woman scorned.”

She repeated the words slowly, she was a woman scorned.

She had laughed incredulously once at the idea of love ever turning to hatred, or a scorned woman becoming a fury. She knew better now.

But though a scorned and deserted woman, those who looked at her so pityingly were much mistaken did they imagine she was going to turn her face calmly to the wall and die of a broken heart. She was going to make the best of her life. She would marry some day; but when that time came she would endeavour to secure a brilliant position in the social world. Her prospective wealth would enable her to make an excellent match: but there was no hurry for her to enter the bonds of matrimony.

Her mother's hopeful prophecy that Cyril might one day return and ask her to become his wife, had no weight with her. Did he ever now return and ask her to share his life, she felt she could never be contented with what affection he had to offer her in return for her loving woman's heart. She had never been more to him than a pleasant companion, or he would not have left her thus.

She was accomplished, young, and beautiful, and there was still sunshine to be found in life's pathway. Though the fairest flowers in her garden now lay withered and dead, other flowers would one day bloom, perhaps not so fragrant and beautiful as those, but

better fitted to endure the chilling winds of coldness and neglect.

She had made a mistake in showing her preference so openly for her young lover; a mistake she was not likely to repeat in the future. She would never wear the willow for Cyril Whyman, but make the best of her life; and as the steamer bore her heartless lover out upon the restless waters of Fundy's Bay, she ordered her pony, donned her riding habit, and started for a mad gallop over the distant hills, the rapid motion bringing back the roses to her pale cheeks, and balm to her aching heart.

During the next few days she was constantly on the lookout for fresh excitement. The gentle Queenie of old was no more. She was continually organizing boating parties, picnics and dances, and was always the life of the gay company which composed them.

Her mother could not understand this lively, restless girl, who had changed places with her loving Queenie.

At length, to the astonishment of both her parents, she voted Digby dull and slow, and declared she needed a change.

Her mother, full of consternation, opposed her wishes, but her father warmly supported his daughter's latest whim, and promised he would take her to spend the winter with her cousins in New York.

She was soon engaged in her preparations for her visit to that gay city, much to the disappointment of all her young friends, who were charmed with their new social leader and were looking forward to a gay winter in their little town.

In spite of their remonstrances, her preparations were completed, and she was soon launched on the full tide of New York city fashionable life.

Her father, although he much regretted his little girl's absence from home during the long winter months, consoled himself with the reflection that she would

return in the spring stronger and better fitted to face the future.

To his wife's complaint that she would be spoiled by her winter residence with his silly nieces he paid no attention. He trusted to Queenie's natural good sense, which he knew would soon enable her to perceive the hollowness of the life they led, and although the novelty might charm her for a time, he felt confident she would soon tire of their butterfly existence.

Her relatives were delighted with their country cousin, and were never weary of eulogizing her to their acquaintances. Her taste was pronounced exquisite, and her manners charming.

When it was discovered she was the only child of William Sylvestere, who was well known in New York business circles to be a very wealthy man, she soon had a devoted band of admirers gathered around her, each endeavouring to outdo his neighbour in paying her the most marked attention.

The compliments and flattery of which she was the recipient was sufficient to turn the head of a far more experienced person than our innocent little Nova Scotian, but she insisted upon declining all the excellent offers she was constantly receiving, much to the distress of her New York relatives, who were very anxious to have her settled among them.

The rejected ones, for the most part, took their dismissal quietly; but one, more persistent than the others, declared he would shoot himself if she would not consent to reconsider her decision.

Queenie was so much distressed by his declaration, that she resolved to take her cousin Mattie into her confidence as to what she had better do under the circumstances, and was not a little surprised at the evident merriment with which that young lady regarded the situation.

"You dear little goose," she exclaimed, with tears of laughter running down her cheeks, "to think you should

take it so seriously. Do you not know the fellow is an acknowledged fortune-hunter, and long before this he is on the look-out for a fresh heiress to capture. Think no more about him. But tell me what is your opinion of those lovely samples of silk? Would you choose the pink or the old gold if you were in my place?"

Queenie goodnaturedly assisted her cousin in selecting her ball dress, then went to her own room, resolving to write to her father that she wished to go home

She was disgusted with the attentions of her would-be lovers. If Mr. Dayton's distress at her refusal was not genuine, he was certainly an admirable actor; and if she could be so easily deceived, how was she ever to distinguish between the true and the false.

The best place for her, she decided, was with her parents; but before her letter was dispatched, her plans were upset by her uncle Tom, who proposed taking them to Europe for the summer. And, after obtaining her father's consent to the arrangement, they sailed for the Eastern Hemisphere.

Like a flock of bright birds, they flitted from one European capital to another for some months; but constant sight-seeing palls upon even the most inveterate explorers, after a time; and as the summer passed they all began to pine for home. A steamer soon bore them westward, and Queenie, after nearly a year's absence, was gladly welcomed home again. The same Queenie who had left them the preceding autumn, but yet how changed; and none mourned the change more truly than her old friend Marion.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE FAR WEST.



YRIL'S journey west was uneventful, and he arrived without mishap in Victoria, where he was met by an old college chum, who warmly welcomed him, and speedily introduced him to one of the fastest sets to be found in the city. By his advice he was induced to open a law office in the capital of the island, instead of going inland, after passing his examination, as he had at first intended.

Herbert Spencer, the friend who took charge of him on his arrival, helped him to procure a couple of rooms in the central part of the city for his office.

"There is nothing," he declared, "like being next door to everywhere. If a man is in a hurry to find a lawyer, and that is the kind of clients which come first to a new man, he is not going to waste his time hunting around obscure streets for one, but usually bolts into the first door, which informs him that a barrister is to be found within. So here's the spot for you, old man."

The rooms were gorgeously fitted up, and Cyril was soon surrounded by a gay set of companions, with whom he managed to have a very jolly time, while waiting for the lucrative practice which was to make his fortune.

Those who frequented his office were not, however, gentlemen requiring the services of a legal adviser, except Herbert Spencer, who was a land speculator, doing a large business, and was therefore able occasionally to provide a bit of employment for his protege; but

he was almost the only client, and, in his case, the writing was, whenever possible, given to the young lad who acted as office boy, and who was kept at a desk in the outer room for the sake of appearances.

As for Cyril, cards were more frequently to be found upon his desk than legal papers, and the rattling of billiard balls heard more often than the scratching of his pen.

His boy, or clerk, as he was pleased to call him, was supposed to be on guard at all times when his master was absent, as was frequently the case during office hours; for society soon recognized him as one of her most devoted adherents, and as he had acknowledged his willingness to worship at her shrine, no gathering of note was considered complete without him.

Marion had struggled hard to provide him with the necessary funds to establish himself creditably when he reached his destination, but her hardly earned gold was rapidly disappearing before the heavy demands which were now made upon the little hoard.

He boarded at the most expensive hotel of which the city boasted, drove the fastest horses to be procured, wore clothes made by the most fashionable tailor, and was a constant attendant at all popular places of amusement.

He was voted by both his male and female acquaintances as a real jolly good fellow; and in addition to his other occupations, he was soon engaged in paying vigorous court to the only daughter of one of the great financiers of the city, and, although looked upon with disfavour by the head of the family, it was quite evident that the father's sentiments were not shared by his charming daughter, for she appeared to keep her sweetest smiles for the young exquisite.

Those were jolly days for Cyril, and were often afterwards looked back upon with much regret by that young gentleman in the less prosperous times which followed.

Herbert used to sometimes remonstrate with his friend on the folly of the course he was pursuing.

"You are bound, Whyman," he said to him one day, when more than usually annoyed at his friend's recklessness, "to bring up in a bankrupt court, and the end cannot be far off either. Nothing short of a large private income could stand the pace at which you are now going; and I understood you to say, did I not, when you first arrived, that you had nothing except what you earned?"

"Do not fear for me, my dear fellow," was Cyril's answer; "I shall be all right when my clients begin to come. Meanwhile, I must do something to pass time. It is beastly slow work, you know, sitting at your desk all day with nothing in the world to do."

"But how, in the name of common sense, may I ask, do you propose to obtain clients, if you are not on hand to receive them when they do come?"

"Oh, I always leave Stubbie on guard when I am away during office hours. He is always informed of my whereabouts, and if I am wanted, it is a very easy matter for him to telephone. But I am sorry to say a message rarely ever comes."

"You would have received one yesterday had your faithful Stubbie remained on guard; but, as is generally the case when your back is turned, Stubbie turned his also upon his duties, and took himself off on his own pleasure bent, and there was neither master nor man to be found when wanted. I called three times, for I had an important paper to be copied, but I was at last compelled to carry it over the way to be done, for it was something which could not wait your pleasure. Now, do you not see that this kind of a thing is going to injure you? It is pretty well known that you transact my legal business, and if it gets around, as it surely will, that I am taking my work elsewhere, it will give people the impression that you are not to be trusted, and the result will be that others will give you a wide berth. If you

are going to make an effort to succeed here, you must manage to be on hand more during office hours in the future."

"Really, Spencer, I think you have mistaken your vocation. I had no idea you would be able to preach so fine a sermon."

"I had no intention of preaching a sermon, I can assure you. I have as many faults as the average man, I presume; but I know it does not pay to neglect business for pleasure. When your work is over for the day, then take your recreation in any form you please, but keep the two apart. I came to this country two years ago, and when I landed here I had just twenty dollars left in my pocket, not a very large capital with which to begin life, you will admit; but by strictly attending to my affairs, I have managed to accumulate a fair portion of this world's goods. Of course, the times were better here then than now; but if I had not watched for opportunities, and been ready to grasp them as they went by, I feel confident they would never have drifted into my hand.

"A good smart lawyer is needed here, but you have got to attend to your business, and be prepared to push yourself, or you will wake up some fine morning to find you are not in it.

"However, enough has been said to set you thinking, and if it does not, and to some purpose, hours of talking in the same strain will not have the desired effect. So now, let us get to business.

"I want a couple of deeds drawn up at once. Here are the boundaries and other instructions. The great Cariboo gold kings, Morton and Armstrong will be here at five to sign them, so do not fail to have them ready. If I give them twenty-four hours for consideration they will be wanting to go back on their bargain, and I have no wish to lose my land."

"But I have promised to drive Lucy out of town this afternoon. How am I going to manage that?"

"Lucy be hanged! Business before pleasure, I should say, every time. You are surely not fool enough to throw away fifteen or twenty dollars for the pleasure of spending an hour or two in Lucy Waddle's society? If you are, I have done with you. Send the faithful Stubbie up town with a dainty note, pleading important business, which keeps you from fulfilling your engagement. If she takes it in good part, all well; if not, let her go, she will be no loss to you."

"I am not so sure about that. She is one of the most wealthy heiresses of the city."

"Ah! so that's your game, is it? Well now, I have already given you one piece of advice to-day. Now listen to some more. Give Lucy Waddle a wide berth, or you will get left. That is plain English, is it not? She is old Waddle's only chick, I know, but she will have to marry a walking gold mine if she ever falls heir to his fortune. Besides, your chances are slim with the girl herself. She is a most fearful flirt, and has jilted more men than all the rest of Victoria girls combined."

"Are you one of her victims?"

"No! Thank goodness; but it is not her fault or mine either that I am not. I had a lively dispute with her revered papa about a piece of land of mine which the old villain was determined to gobble up, and because I would not consent to such a robbery, I was forbidden to enter his doors again. I had too much love for the gold which the land represented to sacrifice it for Miss Lucy's smiles; consequently, I was spared the humiliation of being jilted by her later on; but she has never forgiven me for my desertion. However, as I have already remarked, enough has been said on the subject. Be sure you do not disappoint me about those deeds. Good afternoon."

Although Cyril was compelled to hide his anger before his friend, he was not the less highly incensed at the advice which had been given him. He not only considered himself competent to manage his own affairs

without the interference of outsiders, but he was extremely disappointed about breaking his engagement for the afternoon. He could not afford, however, to offend Spencer; so he was obliged to submit.

His affairs were in a desperate state, for although he had been but a few months in Victoria, his debts already amounted to several hundred dollars, and he knew not which way to turn to raise the money. His creditors were pushing him for payment, and at any moment the crash was likely to come. Lucy Waddle was his only hope. If she consented to become his wife, he felt all would be well; but if, as Spencer so confidently asserted, she was only amusing herself by accepting his attentions, he was ruined beyond recall.

He intended making her a formal proposal during their drive that afternoon, had not fate, in the form of Spencer, interfered with his plans. His pocket book was quite empty, but he would willingly have sacrificed what he was to receive for his afternoon's work in order that he might take advantage of such a favourable opportunity. But his orders had been imperative, and he dare not disobey them."

"When I am once old Waddle's son-in-law," he muttered, "I won't have that prig interfering with my private affairs. He gives himself too many airs on the strength of our old acquaintance.

"Because he happens to possess a larger bank account than myself is no reason that he should look upon me as his slave.

"I daresay he wants Lucy himself, and is jealous of her preference for me. He might know, if he was not so awfully conceited, that a girl like Lucy Waddle would never take a fancy to a fellow of his calibre.

"It does seem odd that I should be fortunate enough to have the choice of two heiresses. I expect old Waddle is worth a half dozen of Sylvestere, and I am sure Lucy is worth a dozen of his daughter.

"Queenie is a nice kittinish little thing, of course, but she is so fearfully insipid. No one wants to be confined to a constant diet of peaches and cream, although they are well enough in their way."

Ah, master Cyril, no wonder your sister, who knew your disposition so well, should fear for your future.

"What a lucky thing for me I did not follow Marion's advice and propose to Queenie before I left Nova Scotia. There is nothing like showing people you are able to manage for yourself.

"Now, there is some go about Lucy. Her conversation is spicy enough to season a bowl of punch, and when she talks to a fellow for a few minutes she manages to put as much life into him as if he had been drinking a glass of first-class wine.

"I expect she has a temper of her own, but there will be some fun in taming her if she exhibits it too frequently.

"I must not forget that I owe her an apology. Confound it! Why could not that fellow have selected a more convenient day for the writing of his documents? However, there appears no help for it, so I might as well yield with as good a will as I possibly can. Here goes."

And, snatching his pen, he dashed off a tiny note, which he dispatched to his fair charmer, by the hand of Stubbie, who soon brought an answer back to his master, which caused that gentleman considerable disappointment and not a little consternation.

The lady was extremely angry at his non-appearance, and did not hesitate to tell him so in rather plain language.

"However," he thought, "like every other woman, she will come round sooner if she is left to herself; and I shall leave her alone for a few days. I shall be more sure of her if I do not go begging upon my knees for her favours.

The money I will receive from Spencer for this work will help me some. Thank goodness, he always pays the cash for whatever he wants done.

"But I must stir myself, or I will not have those deeds ready by five. Let me see, where was I?

"Between W. E. Morton and J. E. Armstrong of the first part. Morton! Great Scot! Cariboo gold mines. Here's a go! I am beginning to see why Madam Morton or Digby wished me to give that district a wide berth. He must be one of those Mortons. Probably a brother-in-law of her ladyship. But what possible harm could there be in our meeting? Does he know anything about Wilmer's death that she does not wish brought to light?

"I have always thought there was something fishy about the account she gave to her friends. Can it be possible he left property to Marion which she has gobbled up?

"It has always been a mystery to her friends how she could live in the style she does upon her slender income.

"I have always felt that Marion was not quite satisfied with what she was told about the affair.

"Come to think of it, she wanted me to try and learn something more definite. I do not wish to acknowledge that my sister is spending her life grieving for a defunct gambler; but if I can manage to learn anything from Morton without bringing her name into it, I shall be extremely delighted to score one against old Lady Morton.

"This Morton must be rich, for Spencer called him a gold king; and if he is one of the same lot, perhaps he helps to support the crowd down there.

"Madam has likely misrepresented things to him in some way, and she might have feared I would expose her if we should happen to meet, as I certainly shall, if I have an opportunity. At any rate, she had some

reason for keeping us apart which I am determined to discover sometime."

Cyril worked with considerable energy, in order that he might have the deeds ready at the appointed time; but when the hour arrived and his preparations were all completed, Morton failed to put in an appearance. His partner came alone, and informed them that Mr. Morton had gone home, and that the deeds must be sent down for his signature.

Our hero was intensely disappointed; but he did not despair of one day solving the mystery; for a mystery existed here, of that he was certain, or why did Mrs. Morton act so strangely when he told her he thought of going to Cariboo?

Afterwards, when all was discovered, he often wondered at his stupidity in not suspecting the truth at that time.

But his own affairs required all his attention, and that was probably the reason for his want of penetration.

Banished from Lucy's presence, and fearing he might meet some of his creditors, who he wished to avoid, if he went out, he amused himself during the evening by writing a long letter to Marion, in which he instructed her to discover, in a secret manner, if any of the Morton family could possibly be living in British Columbia.

Her answer informed him that none of the name except Wilmer had ever left Nova Scotia.

"Marion has blundered, as usual," he thought, as he folded her letter.

"I am firmly convinced he does belong to that lot; but I might have known better than to trust a woman to learn anything requiring secrecy. However, I will find out some day, or my name is not Cyril Whyman.

"Spencer says he knows that he is a Nova Scotian, but he is also pretty sure that he has lived in British Columbia for over twenty years."

In Marion's letter there was also enclosed a post-office order for forty dollars.

"I can spare it just as well as not," she wrote; "and after you get nicely started, you can invest it for me out there. It will not be a bad idea for me to have a few dollars laid away for a rainy day."

"It is a beastly shame to take the poor girl's money she works so hard for," thought Cyril, as he placed the order in his pocket-book; "but what is a fellow to do? I will pay her back, with good interest, when I am the husband of Lucy."

"Meanwhile, I will invest it in paying a pressing bill. I wish I could add another cipher to the amount. It would go quite a distance towards helping me out of this snarl."

"By George! things are getting hot. I must manage to get Lucy by herself sometime to-day, so as I can have a talk with her, and settle matters."

"I will find myself in a corner before many days if something does not soon happen to put me straight."

"Anderson told me to-day he would have his money this week or I would have to march minus my kit. I suppose I can stop his mouth with Marion's donation for a short time. I do not want to change my boarding place at present."

"Then here's Billings howling about his rent. It does beat all; when a fellow gets jammed, how ready every one is to shove him to the wall; but it is the way of the world, I suppose."

"If Lucy says yes to the all-important question which I am determined to ask her to-day, I will soon make the whole lot of them feel pretty well ashamed of themselves."

CHAPTER V.

FAIR AND FALSE.



FOR a few weeks after Cyril received such wholesome advice from his friend, and while he was under the ban of Miss Lucy's displeasure, he devoted more of his time to his profession, and even in that short period his prospects visibly brightened; but being again received into favour by his ladylove, he soon found plenty of excuses for neglecting his business, and his new clients sought other legal advisers in whom they could place more dependence.

For several weeks his enslaver compelled him to dance attendance upon her continually, but never once since the day when he broke his engagement to drive with her had she permitted him to see her alone.

His infatuation for the young heiress had become a town topic; but he was perfectly indifferent to the storm of chaff with which he was often assailed.

"Take care, old fellow," a youthful dandy remarked one evening while the two were awaiting the appearance of their charming hostess in the drawing-room of the Waddle mansion.

"You have got it bad, but it will be all up with you some day soon. The fair Lucy values her freedom too highly to voluntarily place the matrimonial yoke upon her neck. You will soon be forced to go the way of all flesh, or, speaking more correctly, the way all the masculine flesh which has hung too persistently around those quarters has been forced to go. Her rejected lovers would form a regiment."

"Including yourself, I presume?"

"Yes; and we will be compelled to admit you to our ranks before many days."

"Thanks," answered Cyril, loftily.

"I have heard somewhere that misery loves company, and according to your account I shall have plenty to sympathise with me in my sorrows; but it strikes me as rather strange that you should linger around the light after getting your wings so dreadfully scorched by the flame. Are you hoping that the fair lady will one day relent?"

"Ah, no! but she promised to be a sister to me, the same as the rest of them," answered the other airily.

"It is a way the little dears have, bless them. Besides, as you have just remarked, misery loves company, and it is some satisfaction to see other fools rushing straight at the flame which has already scorched you."

"You do not appear to have taken your disappointment very seriously," said Cyril.

"Oh, I suffered badly enough at the time, I can tell you. My poor heart still bears the scar of the wound I received during the conflict; but old Father Time is an excellent physician. He makes a specialty of broken hearts, and has never yet been known to fail when he attempted the treatment of that disease."

"Cyril impatiently wondered how much more eloquence he was to receive from the lips of this beardless philosopher; but his discourse was interrupted by the entrance of Lucy, and in listening to the chatter of the gay crowd of gentlemen who soon filled her drawing-room, his would-be entertainer was speedily forgotten.

He was considerably surprised to notice that her chaperon was absent this evening, for Lucy, although a very independent young lady for the most part, was always careful to appear in public under the wing of the elderly female who acted as her companion.

It was quite evident he was in disfavour this evening with the reigning power, for, beyond the formal hand-shake which he had received from his hostess when she entered the room, he was completely ignored by her.

The post of honour, a seat by her side, which was usually reserved for him, was to-night occupied by another and newer claimant for her favour.

Feeling a disinclination to enter into the idle conversation indulged in by his companions, he withdrew into a corner, and amused himself with an album of views which represented scenery in his native province.

So absorbed had he become in looking at the old familiar pictures, that he did not notice the entrance of some new comers, and the voice of Miss Waddle's companion, who was speaking to him, was the first to arouse him from his abstraction.

He was much surprised at the old lady addressing him, for she rarely engaged in conversation with the gentlemen who frequented Lucy's rooms, but always retired into an obscure corner when she entered, and amused herself with a bit of fancy work during her stay.

She was voted a model chaperon by Lucy's friends, who appreciated the old lady's discernment, for, as a matter of course, none of the gay gentlemen who frequented those gatherings cared to spend their time in conversation with Lucy's companion; but to-night she seemed very anxious to show especial attention to Cyril, who felt much annoyed at the old lady's persistence.

He answered her questions at random, and in seeking some way of making his escape from her neighbourhood, he discovered for the first time that the room was full of young ladies.

He was much surprised at the discovery, for although Lucy was always to be seen at the fashionable gatherings of the city, he had never yet met any of her lady acquaintances at her own house.

He had often wondered why it was. A general favourite with the gentlemen she certainly was, but was that a sufficient reason for her being cut by the female portion of the population ?

Indeed, it could not be said that she was cut by them, for he had noticed that most of the young women rather courted her notice when they met in public.

A snarling old cynic had once declared in his presence that the girls all hated her because the men all loved her, but they would go down upon their dainty knees to her all the same, if by that means they could manage to secure invitations to her receptions, where men were always to be found in plenty ; and Cyril at that time was willing to believe the old fellow spoke the truth, and that Miss Lucy was keen enough to see through the wiles of her sex, and despised them as thoroughly as they did her.

He could not know by what means they had at last managed to secure invitations, but here they were, and the very cream of Victoria city fashionables.

Could it be possible—and his brow grew black at the thought—that there was to be a large party here to-night, and he, who had not received an invitation, was looked upon as an intruder ?

Was that the reason for Lucy's cold greeting when she entered the room ? Did it also account for Miss Westmore's kindly attentions ? She pitied his position and was trying to do all in her power by treating him as politely as possible.

If such was the case, he would apologize to his hostess for his intrusion and take his departure at once. He would be no unwelcome guest at any gathering, no matter how select the persons who composed it.

When he had thus decided, he turned to his companion with the remark,

"I was not aware that there was to be a party here this evening."

"Nor is there one," was her reply.

"Lucy, as you probably are aware, is a little singular at times, and this afternoon she took it into her head to send invitations for the evening to a few of her lady acquaintances, and, wishing it to be a very informal affair, she did not think it worth while to invite her gentlemen friends, but trusted to the coming of a sufficient number to assist her in entertaining the ladies."

Cyril was much relieved at her information, but he could not help smiling at the old lady's discrimination.

Lady acquaintances and gentlemen friends, he was thinking, as his attention was attracted by Lucy, who had seated herself at the piano and was playing a gay waltz.

Looking around, he noticed the servants were removing the rugs from the floor of the inner drawing-room, and a number of couples were soon revolving over its polished surface.

Instead of obeying her signal to follow their example, he excused himself from Miss Westmore and sauntered leisurely to the piano.

"Miss Waddle, Lucy," he murmured, bending over her as her fingers rapidly swept the keys, "will you grant me a few moments' private conversation this evening after your guests have departed."

"Really, Mr. Whyman," was her answer, without removing her eyes from her music, "this is a very strange request."

"Is it? Well, perhaps it may seem strange to you; but will you do me the favour to grant it?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Go into papa's office. You know where it is. You will not be likely to find it occupied at that hour. If you will wait till I come I will give you just five minutes; not a second longer, mind. Whatever you can possibly have to say, of such vast importance, and requiring such secrecy, must be said in that time. So mind you have it well condensed.

Go and dance now. And remember you are not to approach me again during the evening."

And looking up from her music for the first time during their interview, she bestowed a bewitching smile upon him that quite turned his head.

With a light heart he hastened away, and, obeying her orders, he selected a partner, and was soon whirling with her around the impromptu ball-room, the happiest of all the happy crowd in that brilliant assemblage.

"She must certainly know what it was he had to say to her," he thought, "and she must intend to accept him, or she would never have given him that look when she sent him from her side.

"How proudly he would announce his engagement in the morning, and how he would be able to laugh at those croakers who had so impudently predicted his failure to his face. But, best of all, he would enjoy the cringing manner of his numerous creditors, when they learned he was soon to make a wealthy marriage.

The evening at length wore away. The guests were beginning to take their departure, and making his escape from a lively little brunette, who seemed bent on making a captive of him, he shut himself into Mr. Waddle's office, and with a triumphant heart awaited the appearance of his lady love.

With his watch in his hand, he counted the minutes as they crawled along; but at last she appeared.

Closing the door behind her, she came forward, saying,

"Remember, I give you but five minutes. Now, what is it you have to say to me?"

Cyril hesitated for an instant; then gathering courage, he calmly said,

"As I am forced to be so brief, I will simply tell you, Lucy, that I love you, and now ask you to be my wife."

"And I will as briefly answer, that I must decline such an exalted alliance."

The young man turned white to the very lips as he heard her answer.

She could not mean it. It was too cruel. He made an effort to speak, but the words would not come at his bidding.

At last he hoarsely murmured,

"You cannot mean what you say."

"I can assure you, Mr. Whyman, I do mean it," was her haughty reply.

"You must be mad, to think I should so forget my position. I shall never stoop so low as to wed with a pennyless lawyer."

The taunt was enough. Striding forward, he caught her wrist in both his hands, as he hissed in her ear,

"You have given me good reason to think you would, at any rate, you fair, false woman. I curse the day I met you!"

Even in his excited state, he could not fail to admire her self-possession. Not a muscle of her beautiful face moved as she calmly replied,

"Mr. Whyman, no man has a right to suppose a woman is willing to marry him till he asks her the important question and he is her accepted lover. The five minutes I granted you have now expired. Good night."

And she swept from the room, without deigning to glance again in the direction of her victim.

How he left the house and reached his hotel he never knew. He had no recollection of anything that happened after Lucy left him till he awoke in his own room the next morning, with the single word "ruined" ringing through his brain.

His infatuation was over. He felt nothing except contempt for a woman who could so cruelly deceive him for the purpose of adding another name to the list of her rejected suitors.

He had been told on more than one occasion that she was always anxious to become a sister to the disappointed ones; "but she evidently does not wish to enlarge the fraternal circle at present," thought our hero cynically, "for she has not even offered me the consolation of becoming a brother.

"However, it is just as well she did not, for it is extremely doubtful if I would find much pleasure in the relationship.

"But there, I have done with her for all time. A much more important question for me at present is, What in the world am I to do with my creditors?"

And truly the poor fellow was to be pitied. Turn which way he would, ruin stared him in the face. How he cursed his reckless folly when he found it was too late.

Why could he not see when he deserted his business to dance attendance upon that heartless syren, what a suicidal course he was following. He might have known no true woman would ever ask the man she loved to sacrifice his prospects in order that he might be at liberty to minister to her own selfish gratification.

How differently Queenie would have acted had she been in Lucy's place.

Poor little Queenie, who had loved him so truly in the past. He wondered where she was this morning. His heart felt very tender towards her as he realized how dear she was still to him, and that he probably had lost her for ever.

He had heard nothing of her since he left home. Marion never mentioned her name in her letters.

"I wonder why it is?" he thought; "but it is useless for me to think of her now. By my own mad folly I have placed an effectual barrier between us. I can never retrieve my position here; it is useless for me to attempt it.

"Poor Marion! how grieved she will be when she hears of my failure. The knowledge will almost break the poor girl's heart.

"If I had only listened to Spencer and kept away from that heartless jilt. I wonder if it will be possible for me to obtain a position somewhere near, where I can earn my bread.

The clang of the breakfast bell sounding through the corridors at last decided him to go down. He felt too sick of heart to eat, but resolved to keep up an appearance as long as possible.

He knew there was no way of avoiding a settlement with his creditors, but he wanted time to decide what he was to do in the future before he was compelled to give up here.

When he had partaken a slight breakfast, he concluded to go down to his office.

He knew there would be nothing there of greater importance than a parcel of duns; but he wanted some place in which he could sit down quietly and think. And possibly Spencer might drop in sometime during the morning, and would be able to tell him what was best to be done. If he would put him in the way of obtaining some humble employment how thankful he would be to his friend.

As he had foreseen, when he reached his office he found a number of duns piled upon his desk.

These were all of a more or less threatening nature, and in each case showed the patience of the writers to be about exhausted.

There was, however, a few brief lines from Herbert, asking Cyril to meet him there at noon.

He was only too glad to comply with this request, and after their business was transacted, he poured into the sympathizing ear of his friend an account of his woes.

"It is a bad business," Herbert remarked when the other had finished a recital of his wrongs.

"I scarcely know how to advise you. That female fiend has been pursuing you with more than her accustomed amount of malignity. I suppose she looked upon you as a friend of mine, and partly for the sake of conquest, and also to spite me—for she has never forgiven me for taking myself off before she had the pleasure of saying, 'No, thank you'—she went out of her way to ruin you. She is certainly at the bottom of your failure here.

Now, let me see what can be done. I suppose I might assist you in paying your debts; but that would hardly be fair to myself or you either.

To be honest with you, I do not think you are likely to succeed here after what has happened. You see the public have lost confidence in you, and it would require years of strict attention to your profession before you would regain it. We must think of something else for the present.

"I believe there is the making of a man in you, but you have got to work before you make a success of anything in this world. Have you ever taught school?"

"Yes, for one term, while I was attending college. That was why I was out one year and dropped behind the rest of my class."

"Then I suppose you hold a teacher's certificate?"

"Yes, a provincial grade B. But will it be of any use here?"

"I really do not know; but I fancy it will be a help. You would probably have to pass some kind of an examination before taking charge of a school here. They want a teacher for the high school at Vancouver. One of the board was looking around here yesterday, but failed in finding the right man for the position. Now, I think you would suit them. If I can manage it, I will secure the situation for you. I have considerable influence with some of the members of the board, and I think I have good hopes of success.

"If I fail there, I will look around for something else for you. I am going to start for the mainland to-night. You had better make what arrangement you can with your creditors, and close up here while I am gone, for if you obtain this situation you will have to leave here at once."

If Cyril had indulged in a hope that Spencer would assist him in settling with his creditors, it was now dispelled; and, after some reflection, he was obliged to acknowledge to himself that his friend was right.

It was much better for him to leave the city where all his acquaintances were, an idle, extravagant lot, who had managed to obtain a great deal of influence over him.

"Vancouver," he thought, "bids fair to soon be far ahead of Victoria, and after I have those awful debts squared, and something to start upon, I can again turn to my profession."

He found no easy task in settling with his creditors, but at last everything was satisfactorily arranged; and Spencer, returning from Vancouver, where he had been successful in obtaining the situation he sought for his friend, the young man departed for the scene of his labours, firmly resolving to devote every dollar of his earnings, beyond what he required for the barest necessities, to the payment of those luckless debts.

CHAPTER VI.

CYRIL'S NEW HOME.

IN direct contrast to his way of beginning in Victoria, he passed by the expensive hotels as a place of abode, and hired a tiny cottage for his home. This he furnished with only the plainest of furniture, and began housekeeping on a very humble scale. The front room was set apart for his office, where he might be found poring over his law tomes at all hours when his academical duties did not require his presence elsewhere.

A placard in the window informed the public that C. E. Whyman, Barrister, might be found within at any hour from four p.m. till ten; and often a stray client drifted into his office when all other legal temples of the city were closed for the day.

In this way he managed to add quite an amount to his income, and began to hope that at no distant day he would be free from debt.

One of his first acts after settling in his new home, was to write to Marion, informing her of the change he had made and giving her a detailed account of his circumstances. He expressed deep contrition for the life he had led for the past few months, and also expressed a firm determination to retrieve his mistake.

He declared his intention of declining any help which she might be tempted to offer him. She had done enough for him in the past; but he knew her so well, that if he did not put a stop to her doing so she would deprive herself of every comfort in order that she might assist him.

His debts were the consequences of his own folly, and he must be allowed to liquidate them without assistance.

If this letter caused the faithful sister considerable disappointment, she also found much comfort in perusing its pages. She was more than ever convinced that her brother needed the constant sympathy of a loving woman to protect him from the perils he must daily encounter in his journey through life.

And what was to prevent her from being by his side? There was no tie to bind her to her native land. By going west she could watch over Cyril and often keep him from temptation. She could take some of his burdens from his shoulders by sharing the expenses of their little home.

She would probably be able to procure pupils enough in a city like Vancouver to supply her modest needs.

Her resolution was quickly formed; and with Marion, to decide was to act upon her decision at once; and a very short time elapsed before her preparations were completed, and everything in readiness for her western journey.

The few heirlooms which she had saved from the wreck of their old home were carefully packed, together with her piano, which she decided must also accompany her. The rest of her household effects were sold to defray the expenses of her journey, and nothing remained except to tell Cyril she was coming.

The evening before her departure she was much surprised to receive a visit from Mrs. Morton, who had been absent from Digby for some time; and it had been one of Marion's chief regrets in leaving Nova Scotia, that she would not be able to say farewell to this faithful friend before her departure.

"What is this I hear, Marion, about your going west?" she asked in an excited manner as she entered the room.

"Have you taken leave of your senses? What do you expect to do out there?"

"What I have always done here, Mrs. Morton," answered Marion, with some dignity—

"Look after my brother's home, and spend my leisure time in teaching."

"Your brother's home," repeated the elder lady, scornfully.

"Your brother must have improved vastly since he left Digby, if he has managed to secure himself a home. You will find a large number of persons anxious to learn music in a place like Vancouver. And how are you going to manage to support your good-for-nothing brother in any other way?"

"He is ashamed to come back so soon and acknowledge his defeat in that glorious west, and he has sent for you to come out there and make a home for him, little caring how you do it, providing he can manage to escape necessity of working for his living. If you have one atom of sense left you will unpack your trunks and remain here, where you have friends to look after you, if at any time you are unable to care for yourself. Let the young reprobate either come home or stay where he is and starve, if he is too lazy to work, which would be a good thing for you, for he has always been a heavy burden to you, and of course always will be."

For the first time in her life, Marion was really angry, and, with flashing eyes, she turned to her visitor, saying,

"Mrs. Morton has forgotten that she was speaking to Mr. Whyman's sister."

The calm, though cutting reply seemed to goad the other to a pitch of frenzy. She appeared to have lost all control of herself for a time. Springing to her feet, she hissed in Marion's ear,

"Mrs. Morton has forgotten nothing of the kind, but it was for your own good that she ventured to advise

you; but now listen to me Marion Whyman, and remember my words. Supposing you do start for the West to-morrow, as is now your intention; do you imagine you will ever reach your destination? Have you forgotten that all your preparations were made once before for that toilsome journey, but that your plans were defeated by death? Take my advice, the advice of the best friend you ever had, and be contented at home."

"I cannot, Mrs. Morton; Cyril needs me. Remember, he is my only living relative, and I will never desert him. My preparations are all made, and my journey will begin to-morrow. I will place my trust in that kind Providence who watches over all. If it is the Divine will that I should not reach the end of my journey, I will endeavour to be resigned to my fate. But I cannot now give up my undertaking. I must start."

"Then, take my curse with you," the wicked woman replied; and, without glancing at Marion, to see the effect of her words, she swept loftily from the room, slamming the door behind her.

Marion sank wearily upon the lounge as her visitor departed.

"What does it mean?" the poor girl asked herself many times.

"Why is Mrs. Morton so bitterly opposed to Cyril and myself going to British Columbia. Some reason must exist, but what could it be? Could it be possible that her Wilmer was not dead, but living there still, and Mrs. Morton did not wish them to meet?"

For an instant, a wild hope surged through the breast of the lonely woman; but it was as quickly banished. Her own noble Wilmer would never have deserted her while there was a spark of life remaining in his warm and loving heart.

Some reason might exist for her false friend—for false she now knew her to be—wishing to keep her from the land where her lover had lost his life, but she never would doubt her dead Wilmer's honour.

"Will I ever know the truth? wailed the poor girl, and, burying her face in the cushions, she wept as only a faithful woman can weep, when she finds the person she has loved and trusted for long weary years, is unworthy to bear the sacred name of friend; and to a nature like Marior what can be more bitter than to discover that the revered name of friend is a mere empty title.

When her paroxysm of grief was over, she felt a gentle touch upon her arm, and, looking up, Queenie Sylvestere stood before her. Not the brilliant society belle she had known of late, but the gentle, affectionate Queenie she had loved in the sweet long-ago.

"Why, Marion," was her exclamation, with a look of compassion on her lovely face, which was balm to the other's wounded heart, "what can be the matter? We have left you too long alone, my poor darling. You must come home with me at once. Now, no refusal, please," as she gathered from the expression of Marion's face that she was going to decline the invitation.

"If you have anything more to be done, I will come and help you in the morning; but you must come home with me now, and rest. Here are your coat and hat; put them on at once."

Too much upset by her recent interview with Mrs. Morton to resist, she silently obeyed the commands of her impetuous friend, and arrayed herself in her outdoor garments. She was led to the comfortable pony carriage which Queenie had left at the gate, and a few moments rapid driving brought them to the residence of Mrs. Sylvestere, where she was soon receiving a warm welcome from that motherly woman.

The last evening of her stay in Nova Scotia was as pleasant as those kind old friends could make it, and they sent her on her way loaded with good wishes for a speedy and pleasant journey.

"What message shall I give from you to Cyril," she asked of Queenie, as they were parting on the deck of the steamer which was to convey her to St. John.

The little lady drew her diminutive form to its full height, as she proudly answered, "Tell him I expect to soon hear of him as a western judge, wearing a wig and silken gown."

The contemptuous tones in which the words were uttered were more than sufficient to tell the devoted sister that all affection for Cyril was completely banished from the heart of Queenie; and, with a bitter regret for what might have been, were it not for Cyril's own folly, she parted from her friend and went to the cabin.

She could not control herself to take a last look at the beloved shores she was leaving, probably for ever.

Arriving at St. John, she hurried herself and luggage to the C. P. R. depot, and, securing a berth on the sleeping car attached to the train, she soon retired, and when she awoke the next morning she found they were rushing through the eastern part of the State of Maine.

Montreal was reached in a few hours, and her journey west was fairly begun.

Through the provinces of Quebec and Ontario she was swiftly whirled, past busy manufacturing towns and populous farming districts, the constantly changing scenery furnishing endless entertainment for the lonely woman; but soon all civilization was left behind, and they were rushing through the almost trackless forests of Western Ontario.

These were also left far in the east, and the bleak and barren territory of Kewatin was traversed.

At length Winnipeg was reached. Then came days of prairie scenery. Marion soon tired of gazing at the treeless plains, and turned for the first time to the books which Queenie had provided to relieve the tedium of her journey.

Day after day of perpetual sunshine passed, and one morning was heard the welcome intelligence that the Rocky Mountains were in sight.

It was hours, however, after this announcement before they began to climb their rugged sides. Up wearily toiled the gigantic iron monster, pulling the long train of cars behind him, sometimes with the rocks which hid the sky high above their heads, as they steamed through a deep gorge. Again, dashing by a frail trestle over some seething torrent, which lay hundreds of feet below them, and into which they might be hurled without a moment's warning, were a fragment of those vast masses towering above their heads to become detached and fall upon the track below.

Marion gazed with a feeling of awe as she thought of the triumph which man had achieved in building a highway for his iron horse through this wild region and the magnitude of the undertaking occurred to her for the first time.

At length the highest point of the road bed was reached and the downward grade began. The Selkirks were next surmounted, and soon left behind; and still the tireless monster, with his weary human freight, rushed westward. Forest, country, towns, were all passed in rapid succession.

At length the conductor gathered the tickets for the last time, and, with a wild scream of triumph, and a noisy clanging of the bells, the train glided into the terminal city, and came to a standstill in the great C. P. R. depot.

Marion's journey was finished, and dreamily she watched her fellow-passengers as they gathered together their belongings, and took their departure from the cars, which for so many days had been their home.

At last she was left alone; but still she made no attempt to follow the example of her recent companions. With her head resting on the cushions of her seat, she was only conscious that at last she was near the spot where her dead lover slept the sleep that knows no waking, and exultantly she thought she would soon be resting by his side.

At length she saw Cyril coming through the car, and she made a violent effort to overcome the numb feeling she felt slowly creeping over her; but a buzzing sound was in her ears, and before he could reach her side she sank fainting upon the floor.

Much alarmed, he raised her in his arms and bore her swiftly from the car.

Was he to lose his devoted sister, who had come so far to join him, at the moment she had reached the end of her weary journey?

Hastily summoning a cab, he placed her inanimate form upon the seat, and giving the order for home, he sprang in by her side; but scarcely had they begun to move before she opened her eyes and smiled upon her brother, much to his relief.

"What is the matter, Marion?" he asked, anxiously bending over her. "Have you been ill?"

"No; only so very tired," she answered wearily.

And she felt she was repaid for all her tiresome journey by that look of anxiety upon her brother's face.

"I shall be all right again after a few days' rest."

And she closed her eyes and leaned her head upon his shoulder, feeling that she had at last found a protector.

In spite of the assertion that she was better, he insisted upon having a doctor when they reached home. But the medical man, in a cheery manner, confirmed her own opinion that she only wanted rest.

She found before she had been long in her new home, that Cyril had improved in many ways during his residence in the west, and a wild wish that he and Queenie might meet again, and he could retrieve the wretched mistake which he had made, was ever uppermost in her kindly heart.

CHAPTER VII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.



THREE years have passed away since Marion left her Nova Scotian home—three years of quiet contentment, after her storm-tossed life.

To-night, we find her still a resident of our western capital. Resident of Vancouver, but she no longer occupies the humble abode which opened its doors to welcome her when she first arrived among us.

She is now mistress of a lovely cottage in the suburbs, the door of which we find, as we approach, adorned with a plate bearing the name of C. E. Whyman.

At the end of the first year, his debts all paid, he gave up the situation he held in the city school, and turned to his profession, where he soon won golden opinions from the public, who declared him endowed with more than an average amount of talent.

His friend Spencer came often to visit them in their comfortable home, where he soon found himself a welcome guest, and became a warm friend of the gentle mistress, who, after she learned what he had done for Cyril, gave him a place in her heart second only to that occupied by her darling brother.

He has just arrived from Victoria to-night, and as they surround the cheerful supper table, he gives them an account of a fashionable wedding which has recently taken place in that city.

"The bride is an old flame of Cyril's," he explains to his hostess.

"That is why I have taken the trouble to bring a full account of the affair. I thought he would find it so very interesting. I have not told her name, but he, of course, has already recognized the portrait of Miss Lucy Waddle. I do not suppose you have ever heard of her?"

"And, when I think of it, he also knows the groom. You remember Armstrong, Cyril, one of the Cariboo gold kings, as we used to call them. Their courtship was quite a romantic one. He met her for the first time a few months ago, and fell violently in love on the spot. Her father encouraged his suit. I told you once he would manage to secure a walking gold mine for a son-in-law. And the fair Lucy, whose power has been steadily declining for some time, thought it best to make hay while the sun was shining. They are a model couple, and have already created quite a sensation in Victoria society."

"I was told some time ago by Armstrong's partner that the wedding was soon to take place, but I was not interested enough to enquire the particulars," said Cyril, coldly.

"The elder man appeared very much annoyed about the affair, and has resolved to dissolve the partnership. Indeed, I have already prepared the deeds of separation, and they only await Armstrong's signature.

"Talking of weddings though, reminds me that I have a piece of news for you, Marion. Cards are now out for a swell affair in our own city. Your rector is about to lead to the altar one of Vancouver's wealthy belles."

Cyril spoke rapidly, and Herbert, thinking he wished to change the subject, skilfully led the conversation into another channel; but the young man's manner troubled him much during the evening.

"It cannot be possible," he thought, "that the poor boy stills cares for that heartless woman. But if he has forgotten her what is the meaning of his disturbed

manner to-night. He was gay enough before her name was brought up."

Herbert was so much disturbed by his discovery, that he bade his hostess good-night at an early hour, and retired to his room, where he was soon followed by Cyril.

"If you are not too tired and sleepy, Herbert, I should like to have a few words with you," said Cyril, seating himself by the side of the bed.

"I saw by your manner to-night, how surprised you were because I changed the subject when you were discussing the Waddle wedding. You thought the topic a distasteful one to me, and I confess it was, but not in the way you think.

"When Lucy Waddle refused to become my wife, my love for her, if it could be called love, died on the spot. It was not on my own account that I wished to avoid the subject. You remember, do you not, my asking you some time ago if you knew anything about Wilmer Morton—who he was, and where he came from?"

"Perfectly. I could tell you nothing at the time except that he was a Nova Scotian, who had been in British Columbia for a number of years. I had forgotten your anxiety to know more about him, or I should have enlightened you when I learned his passed history; but I shall be pleased to relate it to you now, if you care to hear. It is quite a thrilling romance."

"There is no necessity for doing so. I have already learned far more than I cared to know about this worthy gentleman. But I do not wish my sister to know he is living. She has long believed him dead, and mourned his death as only a true woman can mourn the death of the man she loves. It is much better for her to think of him as lying in his grave than for her to learn he still lives, and has been false to her all these years. Since I have discovered the truth, I have endeavoured to keep it from her, and I feared a chance word of

yours might at last set her upon the right track, when further concealment would be impossible.

"About a year ago, he came to me on business, and I instantly recognized in the man before me one who years before had been the betrothed husband of Marion. For some vile purpose, I care not what, he had allowed a false report of his death to be circulated in his native land, thus destroying my sister's happiness and ruining her life.

"I was too busy at the time I made the discovery to ask him any questions, but I impatiently await his reappearance in order that I may learn the reason for his so cruelly deceiving my sister. He has a heavy account to settle with me for the vile way in which he has treated her.

"He has not concealed his existence from his mother, for he is constantly sending her large sums of money. She is also a party to the fraud which has been practised. Although she has spent hours in mourning with Marion over the loss of their darling Wilmer, she violently opposed, first myself, and then my sister coming here. She probably feared we should meet and would learn of their wicked deception.

"I shall soon learn the truth now, for he will be compelled to meet Armstrong here before this business can be settled, and then I shall tax him with his villainy, and force him to explain why he has thought proper to conceal his existence from us. I do not think he recognized me, for I was only a boy when he left Nova Scotia, and of course I have greatly changed since then."

"I feel positive, Cyril, that there has been some fearful mistake made. Wilmer Morton is the very soul of honour. He is not the man that would play fast and loose with a woman's heart.

"Years ago, he nearly lost his life in an effort to save a man who tried to ruin him from the den of some vile gamblers.

"A man who could act so nobly towards an enemy would never voluntarily desert a woman who had loved him, and to whom he was bound by honour's tie."

"Impossible; there can have been no mistake. Why has he concealed the fact that he still lives?"

"But, in my selfishness, I am forgetting how tired you must be. Good night, and pleasant dreams."

And Cyril departed, carefully closing the door, and leaving Herbert, who was never more awake, to digest the news which he had been told.

"It is a strange story," he at last murmured, after he had tried in vain to account in some way for Morton's conduct, "and altogether passes my comprehension. However, I feel assured that Morton is not the guilty party, whatever Cyril may think to the contrary. Deceived in some way he must have been, but he never deliberately wronged Marion Whyman.

"I will have to see him proved guilty before I can bring myself to believe him a villain.

"When this tiresome business, which will chain me here for the present is finished, I will go to Cariboo and solve this mystery myself.

"Poor Marion! I have often wondered what was the terrible sorrow which you had been forced to encounter during your journey along life's road. It will be for me a happy day if I can be the means of bringing back some sunshine to your pathway. I shall have one good deed recorded in the book of fate."

With this pious conclusion, he sank into peaceful slumbers, from which he awakened in the early morning to hurry through the business that had brought him to Vancouver.

A few days, and everything was arranged to his satisfaction, and he started for the mining fields, to interview Wilmer, and learn, if possible, the secret of his past life.

On reaching Cariboo, he found, greatly to his disappointment, he was one day too late. The man he sought had left the preceding morning, for the purpose of joining his mother and a party of friends at Montreal.

"Just like my luck," he growled, as he returned to his hotel.

"Here I will be forced to wait for hours in this beastly place, before the stage starts for any point where I will be able to catch the Pacific express. To think I should be fool enough to come away out here for nothing in the world except a bit of sentiment.

"If I knew where I should find him, I would follow him to Montreal, for I feel anxious to see this mystery cleared up, and I should like so much to meet him before Cyril has had an opportunity of seeking an explanation.

"I suppose I could write, asking for the truth, but a personal interview would be much more satisfactory to all parties. But there is nothing to be done at present, so I may as well go home and patiently await further developments."

CHAPTER VIII.

QUEENIE'S STRATAGEM.

IN the days of Dr. Whyman's prosperity, Mrs. Morton, the mother of Wilmer, had left no means untried to bring about a marriage between Marriion and her only son. On the evening of his engagement, when he came to his mother for congratulations, she felt her triumph was complete, and declared she was that night the proudest and happiest mother in Digby.

Marion, she said, was a young lady who any woman in the country would be proud to receive as a daughter. She was good as she was fair, a perfect treasure for any man to win, apart from the countless thousands she would one day inherit from her father.

But, alas for human hopes! How often do we find the glittering treasure we have followed, when at last we have it all secure, it has suddenly collapsed, like an empty bauble.

Mrs. Morton's exultation was short-lived. The downfall of the Whymans, which speedily followed Marion's engagement, well nigh drove the scheming mother frantic.

Instead of the brilliant match she had planned for her son, she was asked to receive the daughter of a bankrupt into her family. This she declared she would never do.

She ordered Wilmer to break his engagement at once. There was nothing, she told him, to prevent his retiring in an honourable manner.

She was not going to receive the daughter of a defaulter, who had cowardly ended his life rather than face the consequences of his crimes, as a member of her family.

Dr. Whyman's designing daughter thought, no doubt, that she had skilfully played her cards, but they would soon show her the name of Morton should never be linked with one so disgraced as that of Whyman.

Wilmer turned a deaf ear to his mother's ravings and entreaties.

"He was not a villain," he told her, when at last he felt compelled to answer, "to desert a woman who loved and trusted him as Marion, in her hour of bitter need."

At last, the woman, seeing how fruitless were her efforts to bend him to her will, made a pretence of retiring from the field, trusting to time to aid her in her scheme for their final separation. For it was her firm determination that they should, in some way, be parted in the future.

When it became known that Wilmer had lost his situation, together with the savings which he had carefully hoarded, the news was joyfully received by her in secret.

His wedding day would now have to be postponed for a time; and, advised by her, he immediately decided on going west, to seek his fortune, for the wily woman knew she would more easily accomplish her design if the lovers were for a time kept apart.

She made a pretence of relenting towards Marion, and promised her son to be very kind to the doubly bereaved girl during his enforced absence from her side.

A year after his departure, she was still vainly trying to find some way in which she could bring about their final separation, when she heard with dismay that Marion was preparing to join her lover in the west.

The faithful girl would listen to nothing which compelled her remaining away from Wilmer; and Mrs. Morton, seeing she was powerless to prevent her going, yielded to the inevitable, and gave up the contest.

But the sad intelligence soon reached her that her darling son had lost his life in a western gambling den.

Then the proud mother felt the bitterness of her punishment, for such she considered the terrible bereavement sent to her.

For a few days, she sincerely mourned, and freely mingled her tears with those of his betrothed.

Then came another letter, telling her he still lived, though his life was even now hanging by a thread. He was, however, in the hands of kind friends, and if human aid could help him, his precious life would be saved.

The writer had explained that he had received his wound in endeavouring to remove his employer's son, who had previously tried to ruin him, from a den of gamblers, and who had cowardly shot him in the back, as he was leaving the building after accomplishing his design.

The wicked mother felt her hour of triumph was at hand, and here was her opportunity for accomplishing her fell purpose.

Marion should still believe her lover dead, and she would succeed in some way of making him think her false to her vows.

She destroyed the second letter, dressed herself and daughter in deepest crape, and wept such bitter tears when she met the bereaved bride elect, that Cyril was the only person who ever ventured to hint a word of disbelief in her sincerity.

A letter soon went west informing the invalid that Marion, on the evening she had heard of his death, had eloped with a wealthy stranger. She had not learned his name, but the two, she was informed, had been carrying on a desperate flirtation for some time.

A year passed before she heard from him, and she began to regret the sending of that false letter, most bitterly, when she again received a few lines from him, informing her he was at present engaged in quite extensive mining operations, in which he had been fairly successful.

He expressed a wish to hear from her occasionally, but he did not care to hear about any of his old acquaintances, nor did he care to have them informed of his whereabouts.

"If it once becomes known where I am," he wrote, "there will be no end to the applications I shall receive from Nova Scotia, to provide employment for those desiring to come west, and I have no wish to meet with familiars, or assist them in securing their fortunes. My faith in all my old friends is dead."

The letter then went on to say he was willing to provide his mother and sister with the means to live in a more pretentious manner, if they wished to do so. As for himself, it would be many years before he returned to Nova Scotia. Indeed, it was more than probable that he should never return.

With a feeling of triumph, she carefully locked the letter away where no eye except her own would be able to read what was written therein.

Everything had turned out for the best after all. Marion would certainly marry some day soon, and all would be well.

Ambitious to become a leader of fashion in her little town, she immediately secured one of the handsomest houses to be obtained, and, filling it with costly furniture, she established herself and daughter therein.

Here she began housekeeping in such a manner as to surprise her old friends, who, one and all, agreed that she was going at a rather reckless pace; for it was known her means were rather limited, and that it

required much skilful management on her part to make both ends meet. Now, although she had received no visible addition to her income, she had branched out into such a style of magnificence, as to rival the most wealthy families of the town in her mode of living.

Every one predicted a grand failure soon ; but, as the years passed, she went on as she had begun, and paid her bills promptly as they fell due.

Her neighbours decided she had received a legacy from some distant relative, and decided to accept her as a person of importance in their community.

Her hopeful prophecy that Marion would marry soon was not destined to be fulfilled, for the years went by, and she sti" remained faithful to her dead lover.

Mrs. Morton at last lost all patience. She invited her constantly to her elegant home, and threw eligible young men in her way, who were anxious to take the dead Wilmer's place ; but it was of no avail.

Marion would sit for hours at her grand piano and furnish music for the amusement of her guests, but she could never be induced to take any other part in their gayeties.

In vain she remonstrated with her on the folly of her course.

"You are very foolish, Marion," she said to her, on more than one occasion. "Do you never intend to marry?"

"Never, Mrs. Morton. Please do not ask me to discuss the subject."

The elder woman turned away with an impatient exclamation.

Would Wilmer return and marry her some day after all ! But no, she vowed that should never be.

When she heard that Cyril was going to British Columbia to seek his fortune, she was nearly frantic.

What if he and Wilmer were to meet? The contemplation was too dreadful. It must never be. Some way must be found to prevent his going there.

But she soon found this was something she was powerless to accomplish, for Cyril, unlike Marion, had no respect for her or her opinions.

It was a random shot that he fired when he told her he was going to Cariboo; but the guilty woman thought her crime had been discovered.

As time passed, and Wilmer's remittances still came regularly, she began to breathe more freely again; but she was soon destined to undergo another shock.

Marion, she was told, was preparing to follow her brother.

Hurrying home, for she was absent from Digby at the time, she resolved that this must be put a stop to at all hazards.

For the first time for years, Marion refused to be advised by her friend.

Dropping her mask she had worn so long successfully, she cursed the girl as she left her presence.

In her despair, she felt all must soon be known. Wilmer would be sure to hear of her arrival in Vancouver, and seek her there to learn the truth.

But three years had already passed, and she is still undiscovered.

She had formed a firm belief in her infallible good luck, when she one day received a letter from Cyril Whyman, enclosing a draft for a large amount from Wilmer.

By the way in which the letter was written she knew that Cyril was in possession of the secret, and she prepared herself to meet the worst at once.

But a week after, much to her surprise, she received a letter from Wilmer, written in his usual strain, and informing her he had recently sent her a large sum of money through his Vancouver solicitor.

She immediately concluded Cyril must be the solicitor who had charge of his affairs in Vancouver, but who, for some purpose of his own, had not yet betrayed her.

That he would eventually do so she felt certain. There had never been any love lost between them, she thought. If she could circumvent him in some way. It would be a triumph to defeat his plans whatever they were. If she could only entice Wilmer from his adopted home, and accomplish his marriage with some eligible young lady before he discovered the fraud which she had practiced.

She felt she could bear exposure much better could she know she had effectually parted him and Marion.

Full of her project, she immediately set to work to mature her plans.

The first step was to select a young lady worthy of the honour of becoming Wilmer's wife. He was not only her son, but he was also rich.

After much deliberation, Queenie Sylvestere was the one chosen to fill the place of honour. Queenie and he, she reflected, will make a splendid couple.

Next, where could their meeting take place? It would never do to bring him home before she had accomplished her object, for the surprise of his old acquaintances when he appeared among them would lead to awkward explanations.

Queenie, she felt, could be easily hoodwinked with the account she would give of his resurrection, but older heads would surely discover the truth.

Queenie had expressed in her presence, a few days before, a wish to attend the carnival in Montreal, and loudly lamented her father's or mother's unwillingness to leave home during the winter.

What would prevent her from taking the girl under her protection, and going on the coveted journey?

She would write to Wilmer, after they had established themselves in Montreal, to join them there. When once she had brought them together, she felt almost certain of accomplishing her design.

She pictured to herself, with almost fiendish glee, the despair of Marion when the truth should become known.

It would be some compensation for the odium which would be cast upon her for the course she had followed.

It is difficult to understand why this wretched woman should so bitterly dislike such unoffending mortals as Marion and Cyril; but it is said we always hate those we injure, and Mrs. Morton's conduct bore ample testimony to the fact.

When once her plans were fully laid, she lost no time in putting them into execution.

Queenie was delighted with her kindly offer, and, after obtaining her parents' consent, she lost no time in preparing for her journey.

Aware that time was precious—for any day the sword which hung quivering above her head was likely to fall—our wily plotter dispatched a letter to her son, beseeching him to join her and his sister in Montreal.

"You told me years ago, my son, that you would never return to Nova Scotia," she wrote; "but Oh, Wilmer, what have I ever done that I should be so bitterly punished? You forget I am rapidly growing old.

(Oh Madam! if some one else were to tell you so.)

"You have not seen the terrible changes which time and grief have wrought. If you ever felt one spark of love for your despairing mother, prove it by letting her see your face once more before she closes her eyes for ever on this cruel world.

"It will be but a few more years before the grave will hide my face for ever from my dear ones. And, Wilmer, I long to see you more than tongue can tell.

"I am going to take Lilly to Montreal. She wishes to see the winter carnival; and I live but to make her happy, for she has sacrificed all a girl's bright dreams for the sake of remaining with her lonely mother, and cheering her declining years.

"Can you not meet us there for a few days? Surely you can spare a week or two from your all-absorbing business, for the purpose of making your wretched mother happy."

"There," exclaimed the triumphant woman, regarding with a complacent smile the finished epistle before her.

"If that does not reach his heart, nothing on this earth ever will.

"I shall have to invent some little fiction about heart disease or something of the kind, for he will never imagine I feel myself growing old when he sees me."

The letter had the desired effect. A tender chord was touched in the heart of her son, and he decided at once to grant his mother's request.

He would only, he reflected, be absent two or three weeks. Surely he could spare that much of his lonely life for the purpose of giving his mother pleasure.

So, packing his grip sack, he left his affairs in the hands of his trusty foreman, and the next morning he was on his way to Montreal.

He was greatly annoyed, on meeting with his mother and sister, to find they were accompanied by Queenie Sylvestere; but, concealing the dislike he at first felt at meeting with any of his old acquaintances, the two soon became warm friends.

Queenie was much surprised to learn that Wilmer Morton still lived; but, apparently accepting his mother's explanation of the facts as correct ones, she firmly resolved to learn, if possible why her dear friend Marion had been led to believe him dead.

Could it be possible that he was aware of the shameful fraud which had been practiced upon her.

The task she set herself, she soon found, was a most difficult one, for Wilmer would never be induced to speak of the past.

Mrs. Morton was radiant at the apparent success of her scheme. Wilmer seemed much attracted by the lovely woman, who evinced such a decided preference for his society; for Queenie, bent on accomplishing her object, always declined the attentions of other gentlemen, whenever he was present to act as her escort.

He soon began to feel a decided repugnance to returning to his lonely life, and at last resolved to follow his mother's advice, and ask the fair girl to share it.

One afternoon, he received a telegram from his business manager at the mines requiring his presence at once; but, before he left for the west, he determined to learn Queenie's feelings regarding himself.

If she was willing to become his wife, he resolved to return home and settle in Digby.

His mother persisted in declaring she had given her heart into his keeping, and he had assured her if such was the case, he would not prove unworthy of the precious gift.

Accordingly, he took her for a sleigh drive that afternoon, and, when they had left the city behind, he calmly turned to his companion, and laid his hand and fortune at her feet.

Queenie, who was not a little startled by this unlooked-for proposal, managed to conceal her surprise, and calmly answered,

"Believe me, I feel very much the honour you have done me, Mr. Morton; but I can never consent to build my future upon the ruins of another woman's life. And, were I willing to become your wife, I would first know

why you have so cruelly destroyed the life's happiness of my dear friend, Marion Whyman?"

"Destroyed the happiness of Marion Whyman?" he repeated, in a bewildered manner,

"What have I to do with Marion Whyman's happiness? Rather ask why she destroyed mine.

"She deserted me years ago for a wealthier lover. Deserted me at a time when I was too poor to provide her with the luxuries to which all her life she had been accustomed.

"She had tried poverty for one short year, and if she found it too hard to endure longer, who can blame her for bettering her condition when she had the opportunity?"

"She killed my faith in the constancy of woman's love; but I have long ago forgiven her the bitter sorrow she has caused me."

"Which is certainly very magnanimous in you, considering all the suffering you have caused poor Marion," replied Queenie scornfully.

"Why have you left her all these years to believe you dead?"

"Did Marion think me dead when she married? Was she not told the truth?"

"What can you mean? Marion has never married. For years she has mourned for you as only a true woman can mourn the death of the man she loves.

"Who told you she was married?"

"My mother. Oh, Queenie, explain this terrible mystery or I shall go crazy. Can it be for some vile purpose my own mother has deliberately parted us? But no, the thought is too horrible, it cannot be. I will not believe her guilty of such an act.

"Where is my poor Marion now?"

Wilmer will never forget the look of compassion on Queenie's lovely face as she listened to him.

When he finished she laid her hand upon his in sympathy as she answered :

"Marion is at present living in Vancouver with her brother, who is, I understand, quite a successful lawyer there."

"Lawyer Whyman," he exclaimed with a start. "C. E. Whyman. He is my own solicitor. How many times have I been near discovering the truth before to-day? And Marion is still free. She was not false to me after all."

"No, she has never married, but has devoted her life to her brother. She educated him by teaching, and afterwards started him in business in the west, and when three years ago she left home to join him, I am firmly convinced one of her objects in going west was to find your grave. If ever two persons were deceived in this world you have been those two."

"I cannot understand the object of the one who has practiced this vile deception, but they have only been too successful in their infamous plot."

"I am afraid Wilmer your mother is the guilty party. Years ago she spread a report of your death in Digby, and she and Lily wore the deepest mourning at the time it was said to have taken place. Marion was deceived with the rest of the world.

"If your mother had not explained that you were alive before she presented you to me a few weeks ago, I fear I should have disgraced myself by fainting. As it was it took me some days to convince myself that I was not talking to a ghost whenever you and I were conversing.

"I trust you will forgive me for saying I suspected her of some duplicity when she made her explanation, it was so highly improbable, and I resolved to learn the truth before we parted."

"Queenie, we must learn the truth now, but not a word of our discovery to my mother. I must not forget, however much she has sinned against us, she is still my mother.

"I am obliged to return to British Columbia. I must start in the morning. Can we not arrange some plan by which she will be induced to accompany us? I would bring her and Marion face to face before I accuse her."

"I will try and persuade her to go. I will make her think I wish to visit the west, but if I cannot succeed you must return here as soon as possible, and I will arrange some plan which will secure Marion's presence."

"We will do our best," he answered, and starting the spirited horses they swiftly returned to the city.

As Queenie had foreseen they had considerable difficulty in persuading Mrs. Morton to undertake the journey to British Columbia, but being unwilling to lose sight of her son before her object was accomplished she at last gave her consent to their departure in the morning.

From Montreal they went directly to Vancouver, for Wilmer, after he was once assured of Marion's constancy, determined she should learn the truth without delay.

As Mrs. Morton was a stranger in the country they were enabled to keep their destination from her till they were within a few miles of the city. Her consternation when she found she was rushing into the lion's den, as she mentally called the place where Marion and Cyril resided, was beyond description, and when Queenie maliciously informed the docile Lily, in the presence of her mother, that they would hunt up their old friend Marion Whyman while they were in the city, her chaperon was furious.

She resolved to put a stop to such a dangerous proceeding without delay. She bitterly reproached herself when it was now too late, for her foolishness in allowing herself to be persuaded into visiting the Pacific coast.

She felt like one standing upon the verge of a fearful precipice, when the ground beneath her feet was likely at any moment to give way, and she would be precipitated into the depths below.

First looking around, and ascertaining that Wilmer was not within hearing distance, she began :

"Excuse me, Miss Queenie ; but, if I may be pardoned for using a bit of slang, I must say your motive for seeking your friend Marion is a little too thin, and one as well versed in your past history as myself cannot help seeing that it is a sight of Miss Whyman's villain of a brother which you are anxious to obtain."

Queenie bit her lip savagely, to prevent the angry answer which she felt tempted to give this insolent woman.

"Your scornful denial will avail you nothing," she continued, with a crafty smile, as she perceived the indignant flush upon the young girl's face.

"I have suspected your motive for coming west for some time, but consoled myself with the thought that where we were going we would not be likely to meet the Whymans. However, I shall keep my eyes open during our stay here, and you shall not be permitted to leave me. Your parents trusted you to my care, and they shall have no occasion to complain that I did not fulfil my duty, as they certainly would did I allow you to run after an idle, worthless fellow who has already jilted you."

Although bursting with indignation, Queenie listened in silence to this harangue. She felt that by her imprudence she had brought it upon herself, nor could she deny in her inmost heart that there was not a few grains of truth in the assertion.

Cyril, she had told herself, scores of times since he left his native land, was nothing to her, and if he ever returned to claim her love, he would soon learn how she scorned him; but although she felt she had long since banished his image from her heart, she also knew no other man could ever fill the void thus left vacant.

To-day, as she faces her tormentor, she again registers the vow, that, no matter how humbly he might one day come seeking her love and forgiveness, she would ever turn a deaf ear to his prayer.

The lines she had quoted on that memorable Autumn morning, four years ago, when she watched him sailing away, were still unforgotten.

But to her vow of vengeance against her old lover, she now added another, which was to punish Mrs. Morton severely for her insolence.

Her thoughts were here interrupted by the conductor calling for tickets. And Wilmer appearing, they were soon in the bustle attending the departure of a number of females from the cars, after a long journey.

One of the magnificent palace hotels, of which the city boasted, opened its doors to receive them; and their escort, seeing them comfortably installed therein, left them at once, to begin his search for Marion; while Queenie, worn out with her journey, and also anxious to escape further conversation with Mrs. Morton, retired to her private apartment soon after his departure.

CHAPTER IX.

MARION'S MARRIAGE.



WHEN Wilmer left the hotel, he proceeded to Cyril's office, which he found, as he had expected, closed for the day. His next step was to procure a directory, from which he endeavoured to learn the young lawyer's private address, and failing in this, he was forced to hunt for hours before he obtained what he sought.

When at last the coveted address was placed in his hands, he started, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, for the cottage where Cyril and his sister resided. He felt that it would be impossible for him to rest till he had seen Marion.

Arriving at their home, he rang the bell and sent his card, on which he had scribbled a few hasty lines as he drove to the house, pleading urgent business and imploring Cyril to see him without delay.

"I am not accustomed Mr. Wilmer Morton," said Cyril haughtily, as he entered the other's presence "to transacting business with my clients at my private residence, and I must request you before hearing what you have to say, not to repeat your visit here."

"There is no necessity for me to tell him who I am," thought Wilmer, "He has already recognized me." And turning to his companion he began:

"Under ordinary circumstances Cyril, if you will permit me to so call you, I should apologize for my intrusion, but my object in coming here to-night was to see

Marion, and fearing the effect upon her if she was not prepared for my appearance, I asked to see you first. But tell me does she know I am still living?"

"No! Nor will she ever learn the fact if it is possible for me to keep the knowledge from her.

"Be content with the wrong you have already done her Wilmer Morton, and go your way leaving her to end her life in peace."

"If I had knowingly done her wrong, I should endeavour to follow your advice, but Marion and myself have been the victims of the basest fraud that ever destroyed the happiness of two living mortals."

"You do not believe me," he wildly exclaimed, seeing the incredulous look upon Cyril's face.

"You would not condemn the most depraved criminal unheard, yet you would judge me without giving me a chance to defend myself or prove my innocence. Do you call this justice?"

"Yes! In justice to Marion, I would keep the knowledge of your existence from her. As I have already told you your heartless desertion of her in the past has spoiled her life.

"What would you have now? Why have you kept silence all these years if you meant to deal fairly by her at last? Go your way and leave her in peace."

"I have already told you we are both the victims of a vile plot to part us. For years I have been thinking of Marion as the wife of another, and it was only a few days ago I learned from Queenie Sylvestere that she was still Marion Whyman."

"Queenie," what happy inspiration induced Wilmer to use that magic name, which he soon found was a key sufficiently powerful to unlock Cyril's obdurate heart.

"Call to-morrow," he said at length, "and I will endeavour to prepare Marion for the interview."

"Not to-morrow. Oh Cyril, as you one day hope for mercy, show mercy now and let me see her to-night. This suspense is unendurable. I cannot wait until to-morrow."

The look of misery on his face at last touched Cyril with a feeling of pity, and rising, he said :

"Very well, call again in half an hour. I dare not admit you sooner. My sister is far from strong. May heaven grant that your impatience may not lead to serious harm."

He opened the door and bowed his visitor out, then went to seek his sister.

Entering the room he seated himself and began to converse in his usual manner, feeling he had a difficult task before him.

After a time he managed to introduce the subject of their old home.

"Marion," he suddenly asked, feeling the precious moments swiftly slipping away.

"Did you ever have positive proof of Wilmer Morton's death?"

"Wilmer's death," she excitedly gasped, springing forward and clutching her brother convulsively by the arm.

"What do you mean? Cyril, tell me the truth now. Wilmer lives! I feel it. I know it. I have felt ever since I came to this country that Wilmer was somewhere near me still in the flesh."

"Wilmer lives," said a voice at her side.

And Cyril saw his arms opened to receive the senseless form of his sister as she fell forward.

"You have killed her," he cried in anguish, springing to the bell.

"I warned you not to excite her. Lay her upon the sofa, and give her air."

A doctor was quickly on hand and she soon recovered, but he sternly forbade any further excitement, when told what had occurred.

"She must be kept as quiet as possible, or I will not be answerable for the consequences," he declared.

And Marion was dimly conscious of being borne upward still holding Wilmer's hand, which she refused to relinquish.

Everything was unreal and she felt she was drifting off, she knew not where.

She was certain of nothing except Wilmer was by her side.

This was death and her lover had come to her across the wide waters to guide her to the other shore.

Who can describe the bliss of that moment. He had come for her to take her to his heavenly home, where they would part no more.

She heard a voice far away in the distance saying:

"She will rest now." And then the deep waters of oblivion closed over her; but she felt no fear, for was she not still holding her dead lover's hand?

When she again woke to consciousness the sun was shining into her own pretty chamber, and Queenie Sylvestere was bending over her.

Could what she had gone through have been only a dream? she asked herself. Or was she just recovering from a long illness. But how came Queenie here so far away from her home?

"Now, Marion," said the little lady in a commanding tone, "I see you are dying to begin your questions but before I will answer you a single one you must eat your breakfast."

And she drew forward a tiny stand upon which she had already arranged a tempting repast.

Marion managed to dispose of enough to satisfy her nurse, and pushing back her plate she looked up with a smile, remarking :

“ Now, Quéenie, go ahead.”

“ All right,” laughed the other, “ but first you must tell me how much you remember of what occurred here last night.”

“ I have a dim recollection of Wilmer appearing, and he seemed to be taking me away so far. I thought I was dying and he had come to show me the way to the other world. When we plunged into the cold river I knew nothing more till I awoke to find you standing by me.”

“ Which was real enough. When Wilmer came you fainted, and the doctor had to administer some powerful opiate to quiet your nerves, which, I suppose, accounts for your fanciful delusions about dying.

“ Now, if you feel strong enough, suppose you allow me to assist you in dressing, for Wilmer is all impatience to see you again, poor fellow.”

Her dreaming languor vanquished at the mention of Wilmer's name, and she was soon arrayed in a dainty morning gown, and escorted by the triumphant Queenie into his presence.

Here she was left alone with her lover while her companion wandered into the garden and amused herself in gathering a few belated flowers which she found blossoming in a sheltered corner.

A long explanation followed, and when Wilmer finished he insisted that their marriage should take place at once.

“ I cannot allow you out of my sight again,” he emphatically replied, when she pleaded for a few days in which to prepare her wedding gown.

"I must have you made my wife at once. There is no telling what the next move of the enemy will be, when they find we have met. Besides what does a few pieces of finery signify. You can go shopping every hour in the day if you wish, when the ceremony is once performed.

"I have stolen Queenie away from my mother for an hour or two, but the police will be on her track if she is not returned soon.

"You surely can find something to put on while you stand before the parson.

"The arrangements are all made and only the consent of the bride is necessary before we can carry them out. The license is procured, the parson notified, the ring bought and the church opened. Cyril will give the bride away and Queenie and Spencer, who arrived this morning, will support us through the trying ordeal.

"We have been parted long enough, my darling, why should we waste the few years of our life yet remaining? Say yes, my darling, and let us have the ceremony performed at once."

Her lover's tender pleading coupled with Queenie's at length prevailed and Marion at last consented to be arrayed for her bridal.

"Now, Marion," chattered Queenie when she shut her into her room, "let us see what you have in the shape of a dress suitable for this important event. Something besides those awful black robes, which Cyril, your brother," she added quickly, perceiving the slip she had made in mentioning Cyril's name, "used to hate to see you wearing in Nova Scotia.

"Oh, here is just the thing," she cried exultantly, as she pounced upon a delicate gray cloth suit trimmed with seal.

"Off with your wrapper miss and let me envelope you in your bridal robes.

"By the way, what a handsome fellow that Spencer is, who is to act the part of right hand supporter. I shall set my cap for him if I have time, and he is not already married. We will make a handsome couple. Don't you think so?"

"Oh Queenie, don't," implored her friend, "I cannot bear to hear you joking on such a subject."

"Oh don't imagine I am joking," answered the other coolly. "I am in sober earnest, I can tell you. The old folks are very anxious to see me spliced, and I promised before I left home to consider the matter during my absence."

"I suppose they are afraid I will soon be losing my good looks, and they do not want an old maid on their hands."

"Now, this Spencer has taken my fancy and you need not be surprised to see me making desperate love to him before a week."

"No I do not mean that of course, do not look so horrified, but I will be having him making desperate love to me. You need not look so incredulous. I learned the art of attraction during my visit to New York three or four years ago, and I have been practicing ever since."

"They gave me the name of being an awful flirt at home, but I do not think I am deserving of that title."

Marion looked wistfully at her friend, as she acknowledged to herself, how wide was now the gulf which separated her and Cyril.

She had not seen the chilling greeting which his old love had given her brother that morning, and which had sent poor Cyril to prepare for his sister's nuptials with an aching heart, but she gathered from her manner and conversation that all love for her youthful sweetheart had long been crushed from out Queenie's bosom.

Her meditations were interrupted by a summons from Cyril and in a few moments the wedding party were on their way to the church where the ceremony was to take place.

They were all much surprised on entering its portals to find that quite a number of the bride's friends had assembled to witness her marriage, for the story of her life had already begun to spread and all were anxious to be present at the romantic wedding.

As the party passed up the aisle the organist and choir, who were in their accustomed places, started a bridal hymn and at its close the words were spoken which united the lives of Marion Whyman and Wilmer Morton.

When the bride and groom had received the greetings of their friends, for Marion found that her husband appeared well known in her own circle, they entered a carriage and, followed by the rest of the party, they were driven directly to the hotel where Mrs. Morton was residing, for it was Wilmer's intention to confront the guilty woman and tax her with her crimes in the presence of his wife and her friends.

Without a moment's warning they were ushered into the room where she was sitting.

Her look of relief when she saw her son changing to absolute fear when she discovered who was his companion.

She had reluctantly given her consent to Queenie's driving out alone with him that morning. He had given his mother to understand that he had something very important to say to her which could not be said in the presence of witnesses.

She had instantly concluded that something, was to ask the girl to become his wife and they were permitted to depart without further opposition.

Their prolonged absence had filled her with a vague alarm, which became a certainty when she saw Marion leaning upon the arm of her son with such a look of happiness upon her face as had been a stranger there for many years.

All she knew, was now discovered and the stern look upon the face of her son told her that from him she could expect no mercy.

She took one backward step as they came toward her and with a wild shriek she sank senseless at the feet of the two she had so bitterly wronged.

Medical aid was soon on the spot, but all efforts to restore her were unavailing. She had been summoned to a higher tribunal, and only her lifeless clay was left for her earthly judges.

CHAPTER X.

HOME AGAIN.



THE tender heart of Marion could not cherish hatred for the dead, and her tears were mingled freely with those of the bereaved daughter who so bitterly bewailed her darling mother's untimely end.

Lily pleaded hard for her brother's consent to their mother being laid to rest with her kindred, and Marion, seeing how it would comfort her new sister, joined in her prayer.

Wilmer could not refuse Lily's request when it was coupled by his wife's eloquent pleading, so he reluctantly consented to their wishes.

Their preparations were quickly made, and, clad in deepest mourning, they began their tiresome funeral journey eastward.

Cyril and Queenie parted as they had met, and Marion, with a heavy heart, commended her brother to Spencer's care as she bade him good-bye.

A telegram announcing Mrs. Morton's tragic end was sent by Wilmer from Montreal, and, on their arrival at Digby, they were met by nearly one-half the inhabitants of the town.

Marion and Queenie were received by Mr. and Mrs. Sylvestere, with open arms, and the surprise and delight of that worthy couple knew no bounds when they found Wilmer was still alive, and also that he was the husband of Marion.

Mr. Sylvestere, who had always been a warm friend and champion of Marion's, and had often been heard to declare her equal did not exist, was charmed beyond description over the change in her fortune.

"I always knew, Marion," he told her on the evening of her arrival, "that nature never designed you for an old maid, and as there was no one who could fill Wilmer's place, he had to be resurrected in order that you might be able to have Mistress carved upon your monument; but where in the world has he been buried all these years?"

"It is a long and painful story, Mr. Sylvestere, which we are too tired to relate to-night," answered Marion with dignity, as she perceived the flush upon her husband's face.

The recent bereavement in her husband's family prevented Marion's appearance in society; but the numerous calls made upon her testified to her popularity during her former residence in Digby.

Mrs. Sylvestere insisted that they should all make her house their home during their stay in their native land, which Wilmer declared should be long enough for his wife and sister to recover from their fatigue, before they started on their return journey; for Lily, he decided, as she had no near relatives in Nova Scotia, must accompany them to their western home.

In the interval, he dismantled his mother's old home, sold the furniture, and gave up the lease.

"If we should ever return to Digby, which is extremely improbable, he told Marion when she endeavoured to remonstrate with him for disposing of everything, "we will want nothing to remind us of the past."

The surprise which Wilmer caused by his appearance among his old friends, who all thought him dead, was unbounded, but as Marion had begged that his mother's treachery should not be exposed to her old acquaintances,

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he endeavoured to gratify their curiosity without exposing the deception which she had perpetrated.

A month passed pleasantly away before he considered them sufficiently rested to return to the land of their adoption.

The day before their departure, he requested Marion to accompany him to the place where her parents were buried; and as they neared the secluded spot, she was much surprised to find the wooden pailings, which enclosed their graves, had been replaced by a handsome iron one.

The interior, where, in summer, roses shed their fragrant perfume above the hallowed dead, had been left undisturbed, but a beautiful monument had been placed at their heads.

She lent over the railing and read the appropriate inscription carved upon the marble tablets, then turned to her husband, with glistening eyes and outstretched hands.

"Wilmer, how can I ever thank you?" she murmured tremulously.

"How could you know that this was one of the dearest wishes of my heart? I did not think it could be done during the winter, but I intended asking Mr. Sylvestere before I left to have it attended to next summer."

"I knew my Marion would wish to have her parents' graves cared for, though she would be too far away to visit them; but your thanks should be reserved for Cyril, my darling. I have simply carried out his wishes here."

"Dear Cyril," exclaimed Marion softly, "He has so little to make him happy."

"I always thought that he and Queenie would one day marry. What has parted them?"

"Cyril would not ask Queenie to share his poverty, and I fancy she has resented his desertion. I think he still loves her dearly, but she has evidently long ceased to care for him."

"I am not so sure of that. I have a fancy that in the inmost recess of little Queenie's loving heart there is still a corner reserved for Cyril; but she is too proud to acknowledge it even to herself, and Cyril is also too proud to boldly storm the fortress and enter into possession."

"If my opinion of the girl is correct, she must be wooed before she is won. But will Cyril ever be brave enough to persevere in his wooing?"

"I observed them closely when they met in Vancouver, and they gave me the impression of still being warmly attached to each other; but all their skill was called into play for the purpose of deceiving each other."

"Cyril, you must remember, has seen such a living example in the person of his sister of what a woman's constancy can be, that he has lost faith in Queenie. He forgets that there are few mortals who would be true to their heart's affections through life and death."

"Queenie possesses an affectionate disposition as the average maiden and is well worth the trouble of winning, but Cyril expects too much, and will, I fear, never endeavour to learn the truth, which she seems determined to conceal."

"But we must not stay out here longer my wife. You must try and think of this spot, not as desolate as it now appears, but picture to yourself the loved dead as sleeping beneath a coverlid of roses, with the happy birds singing in the leafy branches above their heads, and yonder brook softly murmuring as it flows gently by their bed, seemingly fearful of disturbing their repose."

Marion pondered well over what her husband had said during their rather silent homeward drive.

Could he be correct in his opinion of her brother and her friend?

That Cyril still cared for Queenie she felt no difficulty in believing, but that the girl still cherished an affection for her old lover she felt could not be true. And if it is really so, she thought sadly, what can ever be done to bring them together again?

The North American continent is an effectual barrier in their case. Queenie is sure to marry soon, for her parents are so anxious to have her settled, and when she does there will be an end to Cyril's happiness.

As they neared the town, Wilmer roused himself from the fit of abstraction in which he had been indulging since they left Dr. and Mrs. Whyman's graves, and claimed his wife's attention.

"I would, Marion," he said, as they passed by his old home which was situated on the outskirts of the village, "have kept Digby sacred from the depredations of that ruthless invader of old historic spots, which they call modern improvement. It was such a quaint old place in the past, with its old fashioned homes nestling among the hills, it seems a sacrilege to destroy such a picture of rural beauty.

"It should have been kept as a place to come for rest when one is tired of the constant strife in the selfish outside world.

"But now behold the change. The streets are brilliant with electric light, rivaling the beams of golden moonlight, which, no where else, has ever seemed to shine with half the radiancy as upon our beautiful Digby.

"The numerous fashionable residences, which soar their lofty heads above the old fashioned cottages of our ancestors testifies to the fact that worldly ambition has to a certain extent crept into this almost earthly Eden.

"She may have become a fashionable watering place in recent years, but those who knew her long ago can feel no pleasure in the change.

"The American tourists who annually visit her and rave over her picturesque beauty as she is, knew her not as she was before steam and electricity established themselves upon her shores."

"And would you keep her in the back-ground when her sister towns and villages are striving to keep abreast of the times?" asked Marion, much surprised at the melancholy view which he had taken of Digby, and the numberless improvements which had been made in her midst during the past decade—improvements of which she well knew the modern Digbyonian was not a little proud.

"By no means if I could see any good resulting from the change. But what enterprise is to be found here that will support all this luxury? With all her display, I find she is compelled to look for outside aid to support her in her splendour."

"You have lived so long among your bustling western millionaires, laughed Marion, "that you despise the day of small things. You have forgotten that we cannot carry on great enterprises here because the materials with which to start them are not available.

"Oh, there is Queenie looking for us."

"You look as grave as two owls," cried Queenie from the doorway, as they dismounted from their buggy.

"Where in the world have you been all the afternoon? Lil and I were just starting for the police station to report you missing."

"For a drive," answered Wilmer curtly, noticing the troubled look upon his wife's face as Queenie questioned her.

"Marion and I," he went on, in a lighter strain, as he saw the shadow disappear, "have had our first quarrel. She has mounted upon her dignity because I am not prepared to go into raptures over Digby's modern improvements."

"You rebel," gaily answered Queenie, "If it were not for Marion, we would have you annihilated for daring to disparage our wonderful town. You should visit here during the summer, when it is fairly bristling with tourists. I guess you would be compelled to acknowledge that we are a progressive people. I confess it is a little dull here at this season of the year."

"Like the bears, you retire into winter quarters and rest till the spring and American tourists awake you from your slumbers."

"Not anything of the kind," she replied with a charming little pout.

"We are a very wide awake people here in the winter, I can assure you. We have dances, skating, sleigh-driving, and lots of other amusements, to make the time pass pleasantly. It is a lovely place to hibernate in."

"A lovely place for pleasure, but how about the profit? Does it not cost money to enjoy all those pleasures?"

"Oh, western millionaires and American manufacturers scatter their wealth here during their summer visits, and we have the happy faculty of taking care of what we gather. Besides, you have forgotten that the white wings of our fishermen bring countless stores of gold to our shores."

"You must not imagine because we do not have a gold mine in our midst that we never see the precious metal. Our railways and steamboats are constantly pouring the treasures of other lands into our laps."

"There goes the teabell. Lil and I have an engagement this evening. You have managed to exist all the afternoon without our aid, so you will, no doubt, be able to get through the evening in some way."

Marion glanced at her husband with a mischievous smile as Queenie finished.

Her expression seemed to say, You have the worst of the argument.

And Wilmer, good-naturedly accepting his defeat, drew the young lady's hand through his arm and led her into the dining-room.

"I tell Lil," she merrily exclaimed, as she seated herself at the table, "that she is not to have anything to say to Mr. Spencer, for I have set my heart on him for a husband.

"Do you think, Mr. Morton, I can induce him to transfer himself and his millions to Digby?"

"I am afraid not. He would not think there was room enough for him to exercise around here."

"Then, I shall have to go west,"—with mock resignation. "Marion, you will have me for a neighbour after all."

"I hope so," answered Marion earnestly, as she looked steadfastly into the girl's glowing face; and Queenie, perceiving the mistake she had made, quickly changed the conversation.

Mrs. Sylvestere waylaid Marion as they left the supper room, and carried her off to her private apartment for a quiet chat.

"Do you think, Marion," asked the elder lady, as she drew a couple of comfortable lounging chairs before the glowing grate, for herself and visitor, "that Queenie and Cyril still care for each other?"

"It is hard for me to say, my dear Mrs. Sylvestere," answered Marion. "That Cyril cares for Queenie, I feel assured, although I am not in my brother's confidence in the matter. But I am not so certain about Queenie's affection for Cyril."

"Who is this Spencer she talks so much about?"

"A friend of Wilmer's, who stood with her when we were married. That is only a bit of her nonsense. She cares nothing about him."

"I would give much, Marion, to see Queenie happily married, but she seems extremely hard to please. She has refused some most excellent matches, both in Nova Scotia and New York during the past four years. I cannot understand what she wants or what she is waiting for unless it is Cyril."

"She certainly is not waiting for Cyril," said Marion, decidedly, "for she scarcely treated him civilly when they met in Vancouver."

"I know the poor boy felt very much hurt at her manner, but he made no complaint."

"Then, if it is not Cyril, who can it be?" she asked, rising, with a troubled look, and Marion could only echo her question.

The next day, they bade an affectionate adieu to their kind entertainers, and turned their faces once more to the distant west.

Wilmer insisted that their homeward journey should be made in easy stages, and a considerable halt was made at Montreal, where a large quantity of furniture and art treasures were selected for the adornment of their western home, which he declared should be one of the finest residences in Vancouver, where he purposed for the future to reside.

Marion, seated in the elegant palace car which bore her onward, and surrounded by every luxury which her husband's thoughtful care or money could procure, could not help contrasting the present with her former lonely journey.

The various amusements which he was constantly providing on the road, caused the time to pass like magic, and almost before they were aware of the fact they had arrived at Kamloops, one of the principal inland towns of the western province.

Here they were soon joined by Cyril, for whom Wilmer had telegraphed when they left Calgary and in whose care he left them while he departed for the mines at Cariboo, after instructing him to take them to Vancouver when they were sufficiently rested, where he planned to join them in a few days.

The meeting between Marion and her brother was a warm one, and as she looked upon his handsome face where lines of care were already beginning to appear, she resolved to try and bring about a match between him and Lily.

"Queenie," she reflected; "is probably lost to him forever, and Lily will make him an excellent wife.

She had developed quite a taste for match making during the past few weeks, and it was amusing to watch the little matronly airs which she had assumed, and which became her so well.

After Cyril was disposed of she resolved to see what she could do for Spencer in the way of providing him a wife, but Cyril, she thought, must be her first care.

The parties in question being fortunately unconscious of the plans formed for their mutual benefit, became excellent friends during the time they were thrown together, and Marion was delighted to note Cyril's attentions to her sister-in-law.

Her old servants, who still retained their places in Cyril's household, were much pleased to again welcome their beloved mistress, and their life fell gradually into the old groove, while Wilmer was engaged in settling his business in the interior so that it could, in future, be left almost entirely to the management of his subordinates.

CHAPTER XI.

MARION'S DEFEAT.

N Wilmer's arrival in Vancouver, his first act was to select what he considered a suitable home for his wife.

He resolved that no expense should be spared to make it one of the most elegant homes of the city.

After much deliberation, a beautiful suburban residence, which the owners were anxious to dispose of, was purchased, and the work of furnishing began.

This occupied some little time, but at last everything was completed to their entire satisfaction and the owners quietly walked in and took possession.

Marion could hardly realize for a time, as she passed from one beautiful apartment to another, that this splendour was all her own, but after a while the charm of novelty was worn off, and she gradually settled down to enjoy her new possessions.

She felt very badly at first about again leaving Cyril alone, but reflected that it would probably be for only a short time. Everything seemed in her eyes to be progressing favourably and she thought it would not be long before Lily would be his chosen companion and helpmate.

But the best laid plans for the comfort or enjoyment of our fellow-mortals are more frequently interfered with by the parties most interested than in any other way, and Marion's proved no exception to the general rule.

One of the first to visit them in their new home was Spencer who soon appeared much attracted by the fair Lily. The attraction was soon discovered to be mutual and in a short time an engagement was announced between them.

Marion accepted her defeat bravely, and after a time was really glad of the girl's good fortune. She felt assured that Spencer would make a model husband and next to Cyril he was the one of all others she would have chosen for her husband's sister.

When the prospective bride's year of mourning had expired preparations were begun on an elaborate scale for the grand wedding which was to follow. Before this, however, an infant daughter had been presented to the house of Morton, which, in the eyes of the devoted parents, was looked upon as one of the most wonderful infants ever sent to this earth to gladden the hearts of erring mortals.

When Queenie had been informed of Lily's engagement she had, in mock despair, written to say her fate was now decided, and that the only happiness now remaining for her in this world was to know that Marion's daughter would bear her name. Accordingly with great pomp, befitting such an auspicious occasion the youthful heiress had been christened Queenie Sylvestere, Cyril and Lily acting as sponsors, much to the disgust of Herbert Spencer, who did not relish the idea of his bride elect being in that position with any other man.

The affair, however, was a great success and Marion the next afternoon had just begun a letter to Queenie giving her a detailed account of the proceedings when she espied Cyril sauntering leisurely up the avenue.

The peerless infant was reclining in a bassinet at her feet, for it was rarely she allowed it out of her sight. Others might leave the care of their luckless offspring to careless hired nurses, but the heiress of the house of

Morton was far too precious a parcel of humanity to be allowed for long far away from her mother's watchful eye.

Cyril smiled good naturedly as he entered the room, and saw the interesting picture.

"You are still occupying the position of head nurse in the Morton nursery, I see Marion, can't you find a competent woman to take your place?"

"I have a nurse, thank you," answered his sister coldly, as he came towards her.

"Indeed, she is eating her dinner, I suppose. Are you writing more invitations for to-morrow's celebration?"

"No, I am writing to Queenie."

"Why not wait until after the wedding, and have some news worth writing about?"

"I have the christening to write about," answered his sister with some asperity.

"Oh, so you have," and another provoking smile accompanied the exclamation.

Then seeing Marion was really offended he hastily added :

"I have just met Spencer down town, and upon my word I think that worthy gentleman is in doubt whether he is walking on his head or his heels. He seems to think that the only interesting topic of conversation in Vancouver to-day, is his wedding. I shall be truly glad when it is all over, but I just helped him to select some splendid jewelry for the adornment of the bride."

"Lily is a very fortunate girl," said Marion, thoughtfully, glancing at the occupant of the lace and ribbon bedecked basket at her feet.

"Do you not think, Uncle Cyril, that our little Queenie resembles her?"

"Well, I don't know, I am sure," dubiously answered Cyril, as he bent his head to conceal a smile.

"Fact is, Marion, I guess all young ones look alike when they are the age of that kid."

"Young ones! kid!" she repeated scornfully. "Both black and white, you mean, I suppose?"

"I could not really say, never saw a white one to my knowledge. All that I have any recollection of meeting were red."

"It is quite plain to be seen that you are a bachelor, wait till you have a family of your own, then see if you see any difference," exclaimed Marion angrily.

"We will not stay in the same apartment with such a wretched man, will we, my pet? What would papa say if he heard him?" and stooping, the adoring mother, lifted her precious burden and bet a hasty retreat.

"Such is life," cynically muttered Cyril as she carefully closed the door behind her, so fearful was she of awakening her offspring.

"Women are all alike, and men too for that matter," he added, as the infatuation of his friend Herbert occurred suddenly to him.

"I wonder where I can find a rational being with whom I can enjoy a few moments conversation to put a little life into me for to-morrow's ordeal. I will not find one in my own family that is quite evident, so I might as well go home."

And taking up his hat he quietly made his exit from the house.

The following day the marriage of Lily Morton and Herbert was solemnized in great splendour. The bride was radiant in shimmering silk and glittering jewels and the groom radiant with happiness, but at last all was over, and much to Cyril's relief, he watched the steamer for Victoria leave the pier with Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Spencer on board, and then silently wended his way back to his lonely home.

But a spirit of unrest had taken possession of him and he began to wish for a companion to share his soli-

tude. Marion's quick eye soon perceived that something was wrong with her brother, and insisted that he should make his home with them for a time, but he soon became tired of being forced to daily undergo an unlimited amount of baby worship, and quickly returned to his own humble fireside.

At last he became so nervous and irritable that he declared he could not stand Vancouver longer, and resolved to have a change.

A warm letter from Herbert and his wife inviting him to pay them a visit soon decided him, and throwing his business cares upon the shoulders of his partner, who had recently been admitted to the firm, he sailed for Victoria.

"Their honeymoon has probably expired by this time and they will have begun to act like rational human beings," he soliloquized, leaning over the railing, as the steamer rapidly crossed the gulf. "And thank goodness there is no wonderful baby in the house, that one will be expected to go down upon one's knees before, morning, noon and night. I wonder if I will find the place much changed, and if there are many of the old set left. What jolly times I have had there, but it came near finishing me socially and financially.

Herbert, with a beaming countenance, met him at the pier on the arrival of the steamer, and he was soon receiving a warm welcome from his friend's wife in their elegant home.

As Cyril had predicted, their honeymoon was over, and he at first found a real pleasure in his visit to his friends. Although they were evidently still warmly attached to each other, they were by no means what might be called a spooney couple, and Mrs. Herbert possessed the happy faculty of making her guests feel very much at home in her cosy mansion.

Had she permitted Cyril to go his own sweet way undisturbed he would have enjoyed himself very much, but like all young matrons she had imbibed a decided

taste for match-making, and she looked upon Cyril as her legitimate prey, consequently every eligible young lady in her circle was produced for his inspection.

He soon began to invent various excuses for absenting himself from her receptions, and Herbert was beginning to feel very much concerned about his friend's desertion.

"Could it be possible," he asked himself, "that the old fast set which still held sway in the city was attracting him as they had done in the past? If such was the case he felt he could never forgive himself for putting him in the way of temptation.

He began to watch him more closely and one morning, when he found on Cyril's plate a dainty tinted note in the well remembered chirography of Lucy Waddle, now Mrs. Armstrong, he feared his suspicions were well founded and he mentally resolved to remonstrate with him at the first favorable opportunity.

"You must try and hold yourself free for to-morrow evening, Mr. Whyman," said his hostess entering the breakfast room a few moments after her guests, "for I particularly promised Mrs. Archibald that we would bring you with us to her at home. She says she once knew your mother and seems very anxious to meet you."

"I am extremely sorry," said Cyril who had finished his letters, "but I have already accepted in a manner an invitation from Mrs. Armstrong, and I do not feel at liberty to break it."

"Mrs. Armstrong," said husband and wife at the same time. A dead silence then followed the exclamation which Mrs. Spencer at length broke by saying "No one feels any compunction at breaking their engagements with Mrs. Armstrong."

"And why not?" questioned Cyril.

"She has always been a leader of one of the fastest sets of the city, but lately she is not recognized by the best circles."

"If that is the case I shall not hesitate to accompany you," said Cyril, who had perceived that his friends did not approve of his visiting at Mrs. Armstrong's but he quietly resolved to make his escape from Victoria as soon as possible.

He returned home and endeavoured by working unceasingly at his profession, to content himself. But he soon found he was not to be left in peace.

Marion had made up her mind that her brother must have a wife, and that it was also her duty to assist him in procuring one. So engaging a trusty nurse for the youthful Queenie, she devoted all her energies to the accomplishment of her purpose.

Cyril, much against his will, and in spite of protestations, was dragged from one ball room to another till at last in his despair he resolved to fly from the country, in order that he might escape from his persecutors.

The fact that he had recently been appointed to the bench of judges increased his popularity among the fair sex, and a large number appeared willing and even anxious to share his honours. But their efforts to captivate the youthful magnate were in vain, for he had resolved to make a desperate effort to win his old sweetheart.

Accordingly he suddenly announced his intention to the Mortons of going to Nova Scotia for a brief visit.

Marion was delighted upon receiving this intelligence, and immediately wrote a long letter to Mrs. Sylvester informing her of Cyril's promotion, and also his contemplated journey to the Atlantic coast. The letter was received by that lady with much secret satisfaction, but she wisely resolved not to acquaint Queenie with the fact that Cyril was coming.

"He has a hard fight ahead of him, poor fellow," thought the sagacious old lady, "but if he possesses sufficient patience and perseverance he will conquer her in the end."

CHAPTER XII.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE.

“**H**ERE’S news for you Queenie,” said Mr. Sylvestere, looking up from his paper, as his daughter entered the breakfast room, one lovely spring morning in the early part of May.

“What is it papa?” she asked in a languid manner, as she seated herself.

“Has the house of parliament dissolved?”

“No, something far more important to the female portion of the population than that. His Honour Judge C. E. Whyman, of Vancouver, B.C., is at the Halifax. What a swell he will be. You girls will have to get out all your prettiest finery for there will be a grand stampede for the great legal luminary when he arrives among us.”

“Oh, we have had just as important people in our community before, and they managed to avoid capture,” answered his daughter coldly, as she slowly broke her egg.

Her mother looked at her anxiously. Dare she remonstrate with Queenie?

“But no,” she thought, “it is best to let matters take their course. If she will, she will, and if she will not, no power on earth will force her to accept him. Interference can do no good here.”

But although outwardly so calm Queenie’s heart was beating so violently while she made a pretence of eating

her breakfast, that she almost feared her parents would hear it.

"At last," she exclaimed triumphantly when she reached the seclusion of her own room. "He is coming at last, and I—what shall I do? Fall into his arms when he deigns to open them for me, and promise to be his submissive and loving wife till the end of the chapter? Or—" and an angry light sparkled in the beautiful eyes as she hesitated over that one little word.

"No, Master Cyril," she said at length, "You think with all your honours fresh upon you, you have but to come in order that you may conquer, but you have come nearly five years too late. However, you shall have the pleasure of asking the question."

Her meditations were here interrupted by an infantile voice at the door clamoring for admission and hastily throwing it open, the three year old son of her cousin Mattie, who had been left in her care while his parents made a tour of the province, entered the room.

Queenie made a great pet of the little fellow and he spent most of his time in her company while he resided with them.

"Nursie said dat you didn't want me dis morning," he sobbed as he clambered into her lap.

"You do want me don't you Aunt Queenie?" and the curly head dropped upon her shoulder and two chubbie arms clasped her tightly around the neck.

"Why of course I want you darling," answered Queenie, as she returned his loving caress, and endeavoured to rock him.

But Master Willie had come for a purpose, and he promptly made known his wishes.

"Det your hat, Aunt Queenie, and take Willie out for a walk, nursie said it was too fine to stay in the house."

"You little rebel you," laughed Queenie as she obeyed the command of the young autocrat, "I guess Nursie wanted you to go with her."

"Yes, but I diss I sooner go with you."

"Very well, come along, we will go and look for May flowers."

The two spent the morning in the woods, only returning home in time to dress for dinner.

As they mounted the steps, their hands filled with the fragrant flowers, the door was suddenly opened and Cyril Whyman, accompanied by her father, stood before them.

The meeting, although unexpected at the moment, was not altogether a surprise to Queenie, for she had felt all the morning that they would meet before the day was over. She knew he would not be long in his native town, before he came to call upon them, but she would much have preferred postponing the meeting for an hour or two till she was in a more presentable attire.

She could not read Cyril's thoughts at that moment, therefore she did not know that in his eyes she never looked more lovely.

"Here you are Queenie," cried her father gaily. "Now perhaps we can prevail upon Cyril to take dinner with us. I have exhausted all my eloquence, but in vain. It takes a woman to manage this sort of work properly. Where is your mother?"

"I have not seen her since breakfast, but she will be here soon. She has probably gone to visit some of her old pensioners.

"Mr. Whyman—or, begging your pardon—Judge Whyman, you must really dine with us, for mamma will be awfully disappointed on her return, if she has had the misfortune to miss seeing you on your first visit."

"There, Cyril, you cannot be heartless enough to refuse that," said his host with a loud laugh.

"Did I not tell you it takes a woman to invite one in a proper manner."

"I should like very much to see Mrs. Sylvestere," said Cyril wavering.

"Well, here she is to add her requests to papa's and mine. You cannot refuse the trio. I must deliver Willie up to his nurse. I will see your Honour again at dinner, I trust," and she swept him a mocking courtesy, as she vanished up the stairway with Willie in her arms.

"You appear to have received an addition to your family since I left Digby," said his Honour as he watched Queenie disappear. "Is it too late for congratulations?"

"No, but rather too early," answered the other with a hearty laugh.

"Not a word to Mrs. Sylvestere. Let us see if she will recognize you."

The caution was a useless one, for as soon as she saw him she hurried up the flower-bordered walk, exclaiming,

"I expected you to-day, Cyril Whyman. Welcome home again. You are not a bit changed. I should have known you anywhere, but you are going to take dinner with us," grasping his arm and pulling him through the door-way.

"Come right in William. Where is Queenie?"

"She has just come in from the woods with Willie, and both were loaded with flowers and freckles," was her husband's answer.

"Cyril has an idea," chuckled the old gentleman as he followed his wife and their guest into the parlor, "that we have been treating ourselves to a son and heir since he left home."

His wife's merry laugh filled the room like the tinkling of a silver bell. No one who heard her could fail to appreciate Mrs. Sylvestere's musical laugh. It was so hearty and unaffected, and she evidently enjoyed immensely Cyril's mistake.

"Did you explain?" she asked when the fun had somewhat subsided.

"No, I have not yet had an opportunity. The little man is a grandson of my brother Tom. You remember

him do you not Cyril? You was quite a lad when he left here for New York?"

Then, without waiting for Cyril's answer, he continued:

"His father and mother left him with us while they went on a gigantic Mayflower expedition through Nova Scotia, but I, for one, heartily wish they had taken him along, for Queenie has neither eyes nor ears for anybody else while he is around.

The old gentleman apparently had a grievance which he intended to air, had not the entrance of Queenie prevented him, and the ringing of the dinner bell just then called them all to the dining room, where they were soon engaged in animated discussion over their soup.

"How did you leave them all in Vancouver?" asked Queenie as soon as the opportunity presented itself for inquiring after her friends.

"All well, thank you. Marion managed to rob that wonderful baby of enough time to send you all heaps of love and good wishes."

"I expect you are all very fond of that baby?" said Mrs. Sylvestere.

"Fond does not half express it. Marion and Wilmer consider that the world was created for the express purpose of forming a home for the peerless infant."

"How about the wonderful babies that have lived before this one?" asked Queenie mischievously.

"Oh, they were probably sent to render the earth a more perfect residence for this especial youngster."

"Does Lily and her husband live near the rest?" inquired Mr. Sylvestere changing the subject.

"No, they live in Victoria, where Lily has already become one of the social leaders of the city."

"I thought the people in the west were too busy to bother their heads much about society," said Mrs. Sylvestere rising.

"You should have taken a trip out there. You would not be long changing your mind. I think I saw more

style while I was in Vancouver than I ever saw in any other city of twice its size," said her daughter.

The weeks which followed Cyril's arrival in Digby were gay ones in the little town. Invitations were poured upon Judge Whyman from all quarters, and dances, balls, parties and picnics followed in rapid succession.

Queenie often smiled scornfully to herself as she saw the village belles pluming their feathers for the purpose of making a conquest of the great Western celebrity.

Mr. and Mrs. Sylvestere's hopes that Cyril had returned to his native land for the purpose of carrying away Queenie was soon apparent to all. At the gay gatherings he was her constant and devoted attendant.

But did the girl mean to accept him? That was the question which troubled her mother.

True she seemed to have no eyes for anyone else when he was by, but there was no telling what freak she might take into her head. She had become such an arrant coquette during the last few years, that she would think no more of throwing Cyril over, after all the encouragement she had given him, than she would hesitate to throw aside a pair of her worn out gloves.

She was so anxious to have Queenie married that she felt she could even cheerfully consent to her residence in Vancouver, for she well knew it would be useless for them to ask Cyril to give up his position in the west and return to Digby. True it was hard to have their one darling living so far away from them, but she would occupy a very exalted position in her Western home. Besides, was not Marion there, and they well knew if all others failed, Marion would take excellent care of their loved one.

The first of June came all too soon for Cyril, who had been enjoying himself among his native hills as he had not done since he was a boy.

He knew he must soon return to his western home, but he dreaded unspeakably to disturb the hours of quiet enjoyment which he and Queenie were spending together, by venturing to ask for more. He felt that if she refused to answer yes to the question he almost feared to ask her, that one of the brightest hopes of his life would be forever crushed.

But he could afford to delay no longer, so he awoke one fine June morning resolving to know his fate before the sun, which was then smiling in his face, sank to rest beneath the western hills.

That day there was to be a small picnic among the beautiful groves upon the opposite shore, and it was in this sylvan retreat that he decided the question should be asked.

Accordingly, when the party landed from the boat which brought them over, and began to break up into couples and groups, he led Queenie to a retired spot, and, throwing himself on the ground at her feet, he earnestly begged her to return with him to Vancouver, and become the dear companion of his future life.

Queenie's heart beat rapidly with mingled pain and triumph as she listened to her impassioned lover.

The revenge for which she had longed was at last accomplished, but she felt no pleasure in her victory. For one moment she was undecided. Could she deliberately send him out of her life for ever? But she hesitated only for a moment. There came the recollection of all he had caused her to suffer in the past, and her heart was instantly steeled to the pleading look which she saw upon her lover's face, as he waited patiently for his answer.

"I am aware, Cyril, that the position you offer me is an exalted one, but you have forgotten the sacrifice I should be compelled to make were I to accept your offer. I should be an exile from my native land and also from

my beloved parents, who would be almost heart-broken over the separation. No, I fear I cannot become your wife. The sacrifice is too great a one for me."

"I did not ask you for a sacrifice. It was your love which I was seeking," he exclaimed indignantly.

Then, seeing the distressed look upon the girl's face, he laid his hand upon her arm, as he tenderly asked,

"Queenie, have you forgotten what we once were to each other?"

"Pleasant friends and companions, as we have also been the past few weeks," she answered brightly, without daring to look at him, however.

"Shall we rejoin our friends?"

Silently he offered his arm and led her back to her gay companions, then quickly disappeared into the solitudes of the dense forest.

He had accepted his defeat bravely, but not yet could he meet any of his young friends. All was over, he thought, and there was nothing for him to do except return home. He had made the long and tiresome journey for nothing.

He wandered back to the boat as the party were embarking for home, and, quietly seating himself in the stern, he grasped the tiller.

The day, which had been so dreary for him, had also been a long and tiresome one for Queenie; but at last it was over, and she was alone in her own chamber.

"What will papa and mamma say when they learn what I have done to-day? I wonder will they curse me for my folly?"

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE'S TRIUMPH.



WHEN Cyril awoke the next morning, he decided that his wisest course was to return to his home at once. He now knew that Queenie was lost to him for ever, and he had never realized how much he loved her till he discovered she was not for him. How could it be possible, he thought, that the sun was shining so brightly, and the birds singing so gaily, when he was so miserable. He felt it would be torture for him to endure the dreary monotony of the long railway journey, but he longed unspeakably for home and the tender sympathies of his sister Marion.

If he could only go by water he felt he could stand it, but to sit day after day in a railway car in his present frame of mind would be simply impossible.

He would go by water. He would take the steamer from Yarmouth to Boston, thence to Aspinwall via New York, across the Isthmus to Panama, then steam to San Francisco, and from there it would be a pleasant sail up the Pacific Coast to his home.

He would start at once. Consulting a time table, he found a steamer sailed to Boston that day, and he instantly decided that he would sail in her. His packing was soon completed, and after breakfast he resolved to walk out and visit his parents' grave. He was in no mood for leave-taking, and he felt that this would be the most effectual way of passing the remainder of his stay

in Digby, if he wished to avoid meeting any of his acquaintances. His train did not leave till two, and he felt he must do something to pass the time, or he should go crazy.

He hurried past the residence of Mr. Sylvestere, and soon struck the country road which led to his destination.

He had not gone far, when he heard cries of distress in the distance, and, quickening his pace, he soon came upon a scene which almost froze the blood in his veins with horror.

Upon the topmost branch of an old and rotten tree, standing by the roadside, and which was still remaining in an upright position, was clinging a little child, who was crying piteously to be taken from its perilous situation; while, beneath, Queenie was beseeching a young man to go to the rescue of her little cousin.

"It is impossible for you to think of such a thing, Miss Queenie," Cyril heard him saying, as he rapidly neared them.

"Those rotten branches would not bear one-fourth of my weight. How in the world did the little villain ever get himself into such a predicament?"

"How is he to be rescued, is, I should say, a vastly more important question at present," scornfully replied Queenie.

"He cannot be rescued. No human power can reach him. It would be tempting Providence to try to climb that tree."

"Would you leave him there to perish? Is this all the regard you have for the life of a human being?"

"I have more regard for my own life than to throw it away in such a foolhardy undertaking. Perhaps he will come down himself if he is left alone."

"You know he will never come down without aid; but as you are such a coward, see if you cannot procure

other and more effectual help. Too much time has already been wasted in useless conversation. You should have no trouble in finding plenty of brave men in town."

And she deliberately turned her back upon the offender, as she wondered if it would be possible for her to reach the child herself.

But just then his wild scream for help was answered, and with a glad cry she watched Cyril rapidly divest himself of his hat and coat and spring among the decayed branches.

The two spectators watched him with breathless interest as he quickly made the ascent.

A tiny, helpless child was above him, and it must be rescued at any cost, he thought, as he toiled upwards.

At last the top was reached, and they saw him firmly grasp the child and draw it carefully towards him.

At that moment Queenie realized her wickedness in sending her noble lover from her; but she felt it was now too late for her to rectify her mistake. She loved him, but by her own folly she had lost him for ever.

But not for long did she allow herself to dwell upon her own misery. Her attention was fixed upon his peril. Encumbered as he was with Willie, would he ever reach the earth in safety.

More than half the descent has been safely made, and she begins to hope that the worst is over. When, with a wild scream of horror, she sees the limb upon which he is resting parting from the trunk, and, in an instant, he is lying senseless on the ground at her feet.

Even in his rapid descent, he has proved his presence of mind by firmly grasping Willie and endeavouring to break his fall, and beyond the fact that he was slightly stunned when his protector struck the ground beneath him, giving him a violent shock, he appeared little the worse for his adventure.

But not so with Cyril. All Queenie's efforts to restore him are unavailing.

At last, in despair, she seats herself, lays his head upon her lap, and, in piteous accents, begs her companion to go for help.

"What? and leave you here alone with a dead man," he remonstrates.

That word drives her nearly frantic; but she quietly raises her arm and points in the direction of the town, uttering the single word, "Go."

He silently turns to obey her commands, awed by the look upon her face, and she is left alone to pour her unavailing tears upon the face of her motionless lover.

Is he really dead? she thinks. Oh Heaven! it cannot be. That Supreme Power who orders all things aright would never be so cruel as to snatch him from her in this fearful way.

After what seems ages to the waiting girl, help arrives, and he is carefully borne to her father's house, where she finds medical aid is waiting, and she is at last told that he still lives.

With a murmured prayer of thankfulness, she listens as they tell her he lives, but he may never recognize his friends again. The doctor fears the blow upon his head has injured his brain. Still he may be mistaken. His arm, which has been broken in two places, has been splintered and bandaged, and the impatient Queenie is at last admitted to the room where he lays, and where for days, unless compelled by her mother to rest occasionally, she never leaves his side.

At last her vigilance is rewarded by seeing him open his eyes with the light of reason shining in them.

"Where am I?" he asked, looking at the beautiful face bending over him.

Without vouchsafing him any answer, Queenie quietly raised his head, and in a commanding manner bade

him swallow every drop of the contents of the glass which she held to his lips.

Without a murmur he did as he was bid, and almost instantly he was sleeping calmly as a child.

"He will do nicely now, if he is kept from all excitement," the kind old doctor told her, as he watched his patient sleeping so peacefully. "But he owes his life to his devoted nurse."

"He risked it to atone for my almost criminal carelessness," answered Queenie, humbly, as she turned away to hide the tears. "Could I do less than I have done under these circumstances?"

"Come, young lady, no hysterics, or I shall banish you from this sick-room," said the doctor grimly, as he watched her efforts to subdue her agitation.

"How in the world came the little rascal to be in such a plight?"

"It was owing to my neglect. I took him out for a walk, and he slipped away from me while I was gathering some flowers, and I only knew of his frightful danger when I heard him crying for help."

I should advise his parents to keep a sharp look out for him in the future; such an adventurous spirit is bound to come to grief. You must now take some rest. Your patient is out of danger; but if it will be any satisfaction to you, I will promise to watch here till your return. Be off with you, and don't let me catch you back here for an hour at least."

Queenie dutifully obeyed him, and in a short time she was enjoying a brief and much-needed repose, from which she awoke, feeling refreshed, and returned to the sick-room to find her patient awake, and the kind old doctor just taking his departure.

"They tell me I owe my life to you," Cyril exclaimed, as the door closed; and grasping her hand in his uninjured one, he kissed it reverently.

"Will you not accept the life which you have saved as part payment of the debt which I owe you?"

"Yes, Cyril," she whispered softly, as she saw how anxiously he awaited her answer.

"Then, let us be married at once. I shall never rest contented till I know you are irrecoverably mine. If my right hand is helpless, I can manage the wedding ring with my left one. Say yes, my darling, and we will have the ceremony performed at once."

"Oh, Cyril," she protested, "it will be such a strange wedding."

"Ours has been a strange wooing, you must remember; but you will consent to my wishes, my own Queenie?"

"Yes," she murmured almost inaudibly, but not too low to escape the ears of her impetuous lover.

"Then send your father to me."

Mr. Sylvestere gave his unqualified consent to their marriage, and an hour afterwards Cyril and Queenie were made one.

That evening, as her husband was calmly sleeping, the bride wrote a long letter to her new sister Marion.

"It was a left-handed wedding," she told her, "but we feel assured that everything will be all right in time."

THE END.

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